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ABSTRACT

An exploratory study was carried out in four Los Angeles Title I elementary schools to determine what accounted for the comparatively high reading scores made by these schools' students on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills; determine whether the schools were engaged in demonstrably effective educational practices that other Title I and similar schools could employ; and determine what those practices were and how they functioned to make a difference in students' reading. Using the framework of ethnographic studies, staff members and students were observed and listened to in a variety of settings: classrooms, labs and offices, the playground and the hallways, faculty meetings, libraries, and lounges. In particular, 24 different classrooms were observed for a total of 10-12 school days. Analysis was aimed at identifying activities, environmental circumstances, beliefs and attitudes, materials, and organizational arrangements common to the four schools and functionally related to teaching/learning and/or test-taking in reading. Findings revealed seven conditions to be common to the four schools: (1) close attention to a continuum of reading skills, joined with a marked emphasis on reading for comprehension, (2) specialization of instruction in reading, (3) "strong" experienced teachers with high standards and expectations for student performance, (4) stability of the reading program and key staff members, (5) an emphasis on writing, (6) teacher participation in decision making, and (7) a high degree of both rapport and mutual respect among staff members. (HOD)

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HIGHER READING ACHIEVEMENT IN LOS ANGELES TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

An Exploratory Study of Underlying Factors

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Research Conducted in Partnership by the

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION BRANCH
LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

and the

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REPORT SUMMARY

SUMMARY: THE STUDY AND ITS FINDINGS

Introduction

The next few pages describe and summarize the findings of a small exploratory study conducted in four Los Angeles Title I elementary schools with higher reading scores than most reading scores in the city. The summary is intended as a convenience for those unable to take time to examine the full report.

The Research and Evaluation Branch of the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Center for the Study of Evaluation at UCLA carried out the study in partnership. It was conceived as the first step in a research effort that will continue through the 1981-82 school year. As such, its goal was modest: to begin to generate some informed hunches (initial hypotheses) in response to the following sequence of questions:

The Questions Guiding the Study

(1) What seems to account for the comparatively high reading scores of certain Title I elementary schools in Los Angeles?

(2) In particular, are these schools engaged in demonstrably effective educational practices that other Title I and similar schools could profitably and practically employ?

(3) If so, what specifically are those practices, and how do they function to make a difference in students' reading?

The Schools

Four schools were selected for the study on the bases of test scores, poverty ranking, transiency rates, and ethnic composition of enrollment. Three were among the nine Title I elementary schools citywide with median sixth-grade reading scores (Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, Spring, 1979-80) at or above the national 50th percentile. The fourth was also a relatively high-scoring school. Furthermore, two (Alta

Loma, 42nd Street) had rising scores but falling poverty rankings, while two (Dorris Place, Elysian Heights) had consistently higher scores and relatively stable poverty rankings. Enrollments in the former were predominately Black; in the latter, predominately Hispanic and part Asian.

Methods

The research followed the principles and procedures of ethnographic fieldwork. Thirty school staff members were interviewed (some several times), and impromptu conversations were held with many others, as well as with some students. Activities in many school settings were observed, including those in 24 classrooms. Documents, instructional materials, and other records were examined. A total of 10-12 school days were spent in research on site. Analysis was aimed at identifying activities, environmental circumstances, beliefs and attitudes, materials, organizational arrangements, etc., common to the four schools and functionally related to teaching-learning and/or test-taking in reading.

Findings

Seven conditions or features appeared to be both common to the four schools studied and relevant to the teaching-learning of reading. Of the seven, four seemed to bear more directly on reading instruction. Evidence to authenticate the presence of these four in each school was also firmer. The four are described first.

1. Close Attention to a Continuum of Reading SKills, Joined with a Marked Emphasis on Reading for Comprehension.

As most schools do today, the four studied ordered reading instruction along a continuum of skills. Tests were given regularly to assess students' progress along the continuum. Records of test performance were routinely kept and kept up to date. When students seemed to need further work in order to "master" a skill, they were usually (it appeared) assigned further work.

But learning discrete skills (e.g., particular decoding skills) was not the exclusive focus of their programs. Each of the four schools placed heavy emphasis upon and devoted considerable instructional efforts to, students' reading for comprehension.

It seemed, then, that the schools' programs facilitated individual students' learning to read at a pace, appropriate for each and also afforded students an opportunity to integrate specific reading skills -- to practice them in complex interrelationships in the act of reading-and-understanding.

2. Specialization of Instruction in Reading.

Teachers in each of the four schools visited had some way of dividing responsibilities for the teaching of reading: teaming (also called leveling, rotation, cooperative teaching), departmentalization, or a teacher-aide division of instructional roles. Specialization was extant especially in the schools' upper grades. In each case, the resulting specialization of instruction appeared to permit teachers to plan more efficiently and thoroughly and to give each student more direct teaching attention during the formal reading period than teachers could have managed had each taught his/her own class in reading.

3. "Strong," Experienced Teachers with High Standards and Expectations for Student Performance.

A cadre of experienced teachers with high standards and expectations for student performance was present in each school studied. These teachers shared a belief in their students' capacity to learn and learn well, even though social and economic circumstances in students' lives outside school were often difficult. Their demeanor toward students and their teaching actions seemed to follow from these beliefs. They appeared to be routinely supportive and encouraging when their students were having trouble. They seemed to work hard, using diverse teaching strategies, to help students learn. Together with their classes, they seemed to maintain a positive, work-oriented environment in their classrooms. They assigned substantial amounts of classwork and homework and held students accountable for completing them. The assignments they gave seemed to credit students with competence.

4. Stability of the Reading Program and Key Staff Members over Time.

In each of the four schools studied, central elements of the reading program and at least a nucleus of key staff members had been present for at least four or five years -- in some cases, longer. The relative longevity of both program and staff might have contributed to more consistent and effective reading instruction.

Three other conditions were present in each of the four schools which seemed functionally relevant to teaching and learning in reading, but somewhat less directly so than these four just described. Time limitations on the inquiry also meant that these three conditions were less fully examined than those above. These three were:

5. An emphasis on writing --which may have extended students' experience with written language in ways that influenced their reading performance.

6. Teacher participation in decision making about the content and organization of reading instruction -- which may have facilitated teachers' investment in their reading program. This, in turn, may have stimulated their teaching efforts.

7. Esprit de corps , a high degree of both "rapport" and mutual respect for one another's pedagogical competence among staff members -- which may have facilitated greater staff collaboration on projects, more sharing of teaching ideas, more fully articulated instruction from reading level to reading level, class to class, and grade to grade.

No one should mistake these findings for "answers" to the research questions listed above. They are only some first, promising hunches. The exploration of the environments surrounding reading in Los Angeles Title I elementary schools will continue. And, as it does, these hunches will be examined in a broader range of schools. Some may then be confirmed, refined, and elaborated as factors that do, in fact, contribute to improved learning in reading. Others may be disconfirmed and replaced by new findings.

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HIGHER READING ACHIEVEMENT IN LOS ANGELES

TITLE I ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

An Exploratory Study of Underlying Factors

INTRODUCTION

What seems to account for the higher reading scores of certain Title I elementary schools in Los Angeles? Are these schools engaged in effective educational practices that can be duplicated in or adapted by other schools with similar types of students? If so, what are those practices? Which of their various components seem to make a difference in students' reading?

These questions served to focus a small, exploratory study carried out in partnership by the Los Angeles Unified School District's Research and Evaluation Branch and the Center for the Study of Evaluation at UCLA. Conducted in four schools through May and June of 1981, the study was conceived as the first step of a research effort that will continue in the 1981-82 school year. As such, its purpose was modest: to generate some informed hunches (initial hypotheses) in response to the above questions. In this, the exploration succeeded. The findings it yielded are the core of this report.

No one should mistake these findings for "answers" to the questions listed. Several visits to each of four schools are enough to warrant only some initial hunches. Nevertheless, the findings described here are exceptionally interesting and extremely promising. They indicate that there may very well be some ways of managing and teaching reading that make a difference in Title I students' learning--ways that are practical, that can fit the circumstances of Los Angeles Title I schools.

But before we turn to these findings, the origin and methods of the study are explained in a few pages each. Most readers will want to review these in order to understand fully the discussion of results that follows.

At the end of the report, some directions for continued research on Title I reading are described. These are an important product of the initial exploration, but probably of interest to a smaller audience.

THE GENESIS OF THE STUDY

Studying the instructional environments of reading in Los Angeles Title I schools* was an idea born in the District's Research and Evaluation Branch. It came about as Branch staff members examined results of the most recent (spring, 1979-80) administration of the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS). Sixth-grade CTBS scores were of particular interest. While all sixth-graders have not passed through every grade in their present school (there is considerable transience of pupils, especially in Title I schools), a good many of them have. Thus, sixth-grade CTBS performance was considered at least a rough index of the effectiveness of an elementary school's overall program, grades I through 6.** An analysis of 1979-80 citywide results showed nine Title I elementary schools with median sixth-grade reading scores above the 50th national percentile.

These scores stood out. For some of the nine, they represented a dramatic increase over sixth-grade medians of the previous school year. For others, they constituted a continuation of notably higher reading-test performance compared to other Title I schools. Moreover, with 196 Title I elementary schools in the District, only these nine had achieved reading medians above the 50th percentile. Naturally, then, the following question arose: Is something going on in these schools which might be of benefit to others?

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*Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provides for federal compensatory education funds. Schools qualify for these funds based on their poverty ranking in the District. A school's rank order is based on an index combining the number of students enrolled whose families meet income qualifications for (1) free school-lunch assistance, and (2) Aide to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Thus, the District's poorer children tend to be enrolled in schools receiving Title I compensatory education monies. Within these Title I schools, students who score below the 50th percentile on standardized tests such as the CTBS are eligible to receive the extra educational services the federal (and related state) funds provide.

**As an indicator of instructional effectiveness, the validity of the CTBS and similar tests is not universally agreed upon. But for the purposes of this study--i.e., as a rough indicator to identify schools for some initial exploration--it seemed reasonably adequate. (However, more detailed test score analyses likely to be useful in continuing study are suggested in the final section of this report.)

The identification of the nine schools was the seed from which this study grew. That seed, as it happened, took root in a nurturant environment. The Research and Evaluation Branch had for some time been considering how District research could best serve the improvement of instruction and learning in Los Angeles schools. A collaboration between the Branch and the Center for the Study of Evaluation at UCLA had begun to take shape with the development of such research in mind. Dr. Joseph Philip Linscomb, Associate Superintendent, LAUSD, and Dr. Eva Baker of the Center for the Study of Evaluation were instrumental in the establishment of this collaboration. These arrangements led to meetings between this author and key members of the Research and Evaluation Branch, principally Dr. Floraline Stevens (Director of the Branch) and Mr. David Houck (Assistant Director of the Branch's Title I unit). Together, we refined the questions which are presently* guiding research on Title I reading and which the exploratory study has begun to address. To reiterate, those questions are:

(1) What accounts for the higher reading scores of certain Title I elementary schools in the District?

(2) In particular, are these schools engaged in demonstrably effective educational practices that other Title I and similar schools could profitably and practically employ?

(3) If so, what specifically are those practices and how do they function to make a difference in students' reading?

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*The word presently is important here; for, as the project continues, more specific questions are likely to evolve from the data collected and to focus the next phase of work. The basic purposes of the research, however, will not change.

The broad, prior questions--numbers (1) and (2) above-- were absolutely necessary as starting points for the study. Higher test scores may be traceable to particular school activities: curriculum choices or teaching practices, staff development, the actions of school leaders, programs for parents, and/or others.* But some major research studies suggest stronger relationships between schools' test results and socioeconomic, cultural, and demographic factors in the communities the schools serve.** Higher scores may also be artifacts of how the test is administered, or students' familiarity with the test format, or of the match between the test and the curriculum taught.***

Or again, they may result when there is a better fit between schools' ways of organizing activities that are culturally appropriate in students' families and communities.**** And it is not impossible, as one techer put it, that "some year it (a higher grade-level median) just happens, you know, you just get a group of really sharp students."***** Given these and other possibilities, there was simply no way to know at the outset of the study what might account for the higher sixth-grade medians of the nine schools identified. Indeed, it was not certain that research would be able to find plausible explanations for the higher scores.******

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*For examples of instructional factors that can make a difference in students' achievement, especially the achievement of students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, see Rosenshine (1976) and Rutter, et.al., (1979).

**See, for instance, Coleman, et al., (1966) and Jencks, et al., (1972)

***For teachers' arguments in behalf of these and similar explanations of test results, see Dorr-Bremme, et al., (1980). On the influence of test administration conditions on scores, see for example Ciciourel, et al., (1974).

****Refer, for instance, to Au (1980) and Philips (1972).

*****This statement was made by a teacher interviewed during the exploratory study reported here.

******It seemed highly possible, for instance, that some different--and perhaps unascertainable--combination of factors might account for each school's scores.

The first step in the study, then, had to be a flexible, wide-ranging, exploratory inquiry. It was essential to cast a net broadly in order to learn, first of all, whether factors that seemed to account for the higher scores could be located and, if they could, just what those factors appeared to be. Such an investigation, as noted earlier, would lay the groundwork for continued research; it would provide information to guide the focus and methods of the study's next steps.

For an effort of this sort, fieldwork was clearly the most promising approach. Visiting schools, talking with staff members, observing activities--considering all the while the wide range of possible ways of accounting for the higher scores--would best yield the information required. But merely visiting schools, talking to people, and observing activities would not be enough. These things would have to be done systematically, according to some standard operating principles.

The next section describes - very, very briefly - how fieldwork of this kind was done in the exploratory study. Readers interested in a more detailed account of the study methodology and procedures will want to turn immediately to Appendix A, "A Closer Look at Research Methods."

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE STUDY WAS DONE

To structure the research, I followed principles and procedures that anthropologists usually use in doing their ethnographic fieldwork.

Visiting four higher-scoring Title I elementary schools, I observed and listened to staff members' and students' everyday activities in a variety of settings: in classrooms, labs and offices; on the playground and in hallways; and occasionally in faculty meetings, libraries, and lounges. In particular, I observed 24 different classrooms, most of them during reading time. In some cases, I made specific appointments in advance to observe classes. Usually, I dropped in on teachers who had agreed that I could do so anytime. I also interviewed 30 people (some of them several times), including principals and classroom teachers, program coordinators and reading resource teachers. I conducted impromptu conversations with a good many other adults, as well as with some students.

Through May and June of the 1980-81 school year, I moved among the four schools, allowing what seemed important in each school to suggest what to attend to in the others. And whatever I saw and heard that seemed at least potentially relevant, I set down as it occurred in my field notes, as exactly and in as much detail as possible. In all, I spent about sixty hours on site, the equivalent of about two school weeks.

Between sets of visits to the schools, I reviewed my notes to identify patterns, or common features and themes, in the ever-increasing data. I was looking for activities, environmental conditions, beliefs and attitudes, materials, organizational arrangements, etc., that the four schools and/or the communities around them appeared to have in common. These situations also seemed to be functionally related to teaching-learning or test-taking in reading. Such things, my hunch at the end of the exploration would be, might very well acount for the school's higher scores. The things that ultimately appeared to meet these qualifications are reported below as findings.

Later on, in the 1981-82 school year, research will continue in order to see whether the things identified in this phase are, in fact, regularly present in Title I elementary schools with higher scores and routinely absent where scores are lower. This work will shape the initial hunches reported here into firmer hypotheses.

To visit both higher- and lower-scoring schools in the Spring of 1981 was not feasible. Given the time available, an exploration in four schools was all that could be done, and it seemed more promising to begin with four higher-scoring schools. Thus, using school profiles exactly like those on the next two pages, I selected four schools. Three were among the nine with 1979-80 sixth-grade CTBS reading medians above the 50th national percentile. To meet certain other criteria, I selected a fourth school with a 1979-80 median at the 42nd percentile was selected. These schools included:

- o Two where scores had been at or above the 50th percentile for at least three consecutive years while their Title I poverty rankings held relatively constant. Both had predominantly Hispanic enrollments and smaller proportions of Asian students (Elysian Heights Elementary School and Dorris Place Elementary).
- o Two where scores had gradually risen (to the 56th and 42nd percentiles, respectively) while their poverty rankings had declined.* Both had predominatly Black enrollments; one had a notable minority of Hispanic students (Alta Loma Elementary School and 42nd Street Elementary School).

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*Schools' lower poverty rankings suggest that the students enrolled are less well-off economically.

Some readers may want a sense of each of these schools as an individual entity before proceeding on to the next section: "Findings: What the Schools Had in Common." For them, a thumbnail sketch of each school is provided in Appendix B.

And again, readers interested in a more thorough description of the ethnographic methods, analytic logic, school selection criteria, and actual on-site procedures employed in the study are encouraged to review Appendix A.

FINDINGS: WHAT THE SCHOOLS HAD IN COMMON

Overview

What did these four schools have in common that may have accounted for their higher reading scores? In overview, the answer to that question is the following:

1. Close attention to a continuum of reading skills with a marked emphasis on reading for comprehension.
2. Specialization of instruction in reading: departmentalized or cooperative teaching.
3. "Strong", experienced teachers with high standards and expectations for student performance.
4. Stability of program and key staff members over time.

These four features seemed to bear directly on the teaching-learning of reading, and there was reasonably good evidence that they, in fact, existed at each of the four schools

Three other factors may also have contributed to the schools' higher scores:

5. A curricular emphasis on writing.
6. Teacher participation in decision making about the instructional program.
7. A sense of *esprit de corps* among staff members.

These also seemed functionally relevant to the teaching and learning of reading but less immediately so than did numbers one through four. In addition, evidence that they were routinely present within each school and across all four was somewhat less solid than that for the first set of features. But each of these certainly deserves mentioning, as I will show.

Now, I will elaborate upon, document, and discuss each of the seven items listed above. In so doing, I will suggest ways in which each one seems functionally related to the social and/or cognitive dimensions of the teaching and learning of reading in classrooms.

1. Skills Plus an Emphasis on Comprehension

As most schools do today, the four schools studied ordered reading instruction along a continuum of skills. Tests were given regularly to assess students' progress along the continuum. Records of test performance were routinely kept and kept up to date. When students appeared to need further work in order to "master" a skill, they were usually (it appeared) assigned further work. But learning discrete skills (e.g., particularly decoding skills) may not in itself be enough. Students probably need regular practice in integrating those skills - practice in actually reading for comprehension.

For the instructional leaders and many of the teachers in the schools studied, there was no "may not" or "probably" about this. They believed that learning skills were not enough. Thus, the schools' programs emphasized reading for comprehension.

Two phenomena were present in each of the four schools studied: (1) the staff appeared to actually use the skills continuua and related materials that purportedly guided their programs; (2) they seemed to keep in mind that mastery of learning skills was a means to an end: reading and understanding. Thus, the reading program in each school emphasized reading for comprehension.

In Appendix B, I summarize the reading materials at the core of each school's program. And as I went about the schools, it was evident that the elements of those programs were actually in use. Of course, I repeatedly observed students at work in the readers and workbooks, on the dittoed work-sheets, and tests that were part of the curricula. But more than that, instructional staff members seemed, in most cases, to chart students' progress and consult their records of students' strengths and weaknesses in the process of teaching.

Note: In a second grade bilingual classroom at Alta Loma, students' Spanish Developmental Reading Program profiles (record-keeping cards) were on the corner of the teacher's desk. They looked dog-eared, well used. All were written on extensively. As I entered the room, the teacher was glancing over one as she talked with a child, directing the girl to a worksheet. After the class, the teacher remarked, "The DRP system has helped teachers, even in English. You know these skills are followed, as a sort of an outline, from grade to grade, and in Spanish it's even more help."

Note: As I interviewed a sixth grade teacher at Dorris Place after school, he showed me around his classroom. Stopping at a large file box, he pulled out a card and said, "Good records - that's important. You've got the number of questions, the number each student got right, what they're missing." Further along on the classroom tour I asked whether he went to the retrieval room frequently for supplementary materials. "Oh no", he answered, pulling open a cabinet door. "I keep copies of those right here, right where I can use them."

These were by no means unique experiences. Similar instances recurred frequently during my days in the schools.* Records of students' reading performance were routinely in evidence; nearly always, they seemed up-to-date. Now and again, I noticed teachers filling them in, consulting them, discussing them with students or colleagues. In the reading retrieval or resource rooms, the materials that were on the shelves (for supplemental work and for re-teaching of specific skills) appeared to be well used. Sign-out sheets suggested that at least some of these materials circulated regularly. As I visited classrooms, I was, on several occasions, able to see examples of diagnosis and re-teaching. Teachers' comments to me, to their colleagues, and to students reflected (most often) knowledge of where in the continuum individual students were working.

Those who coordinated the reading programs at each school voiced strong commitments to what is usually called the "diagnostic-prescriptive" approach to instruction - an approach inherent in their programs. As the reading resource teacher at 42nd Street put it, "We try to be very continuum-oriented."

> As soon as the child shows potential to go beyond where he is, move him out. Reading *all* the stuff, the stories, between the covers of each book isn't where it's at. You test them out, move them on to reading at a higher level.

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*Frequency counts of observations and teachers' comments such as these would be useful documentation, but extremely time-consuming to assemble. The reader, therefore, is encouraged to take the specific instances cited as "representative" with however much skepticism he or she deems appropriate.

The reading coordinators* at all the schools made efforts of various kinds to encourage teachers to teach in a diagnostic-prescriptive way. In at least three of the four schools, classroom teachers were asked to submit their record cards - or at least to report their students' standing on the continuum - to coordinators on a periodic basis. Functionally, this served to hold teachers accountable for monitoring their students' progress in the designated way. It also gave the coordinators an overview of schoolwide movement along the continuum.

Note: Speaking with the reading resource teacher in the lab at Elysian Heights, I asked whether teachers kept up their students' records on the Houghton Mifflin cards. "Oh yes," she replied, "I check them, so they have to keep them up." She went on to explain that she collected the cards three times a semester, just after parent conferences. "If a test is not passed, I will talk to the teacher about what we can do to help that student."

Note: The reading coordinator at Dorris Place had constructed a chart on a bulletin board in the retrieval room. Levels of the Developmental Reading Program continuum were marked off across the top. Down the side each classroom was listed. Students in each class were represented by pins, with different colors for those in the Spanish and English DRP. On the head of each pin was a number indicating the student's level at the beginning of the school year. Teachers report their students' progress every eight weeks, and the pins are moved to show learners' gains.

The reading resource teacher at both Alta Loma and 42nd Street described how they had matched (sometime before the District had) the District continuum to their respective programs and then how they had provided their colleagues with staff development on the new system. They regularly trained new teachers in their schools' reading programs. Both felt that most, but not all, of their colleagues were following the desired instructional procedures. As one said, "Not one-hundred percent of the teachers follow the idea, but most, I think, do. Some still start on page one of the book and go through every page to page three hundred."

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*By reading coordinators I mean those staff members who, in fact, oversaw the reading programs at each school, whether or not they were formally titled "Reading Coordinator."

Independently of one another, several teachers reported that following their schools' program had helped students "internalize goal setting". This practice suggested indirectly that their continuum-oriented programs were, in fact, in use. One teacher at 42nd Street had just finished telling me several stories illustrating students' "drive" to move along the continuuum, when a sixth grader came through the door and called loudly, "Let's go, Mrs ___, I wanna finish up that test and get me outta level 13." At Alta Loma, another teacher reported:

> In sixth grade we try to make them test-oriented so the anxiety level is just a little high. And some of them will say now--you hear them when they get a test back--"I'm still having trouble with such-and-such a skill, but over here, I just made a careless mistake."

The reading programs at the four schools studied were each structured by a continuum of reading skills. The ideas and materials inherent in and necessary for a diagnostic-prescriptive skills approach were evident in each. And most significantly, the materials and the approach they implied seemed to be widely, if not universally and perfectly, applied in actual practice throughout each school. Close attention to the teaching and learning skills, it appeared, was something the four schools had in common.

As I have noted, skills instruction was not considered, in any of the school's programs, as an end in itself. Their shared emphasis was reading comprehension. The rationale for this orientation was echoed by educators in each school. The reading coordinator at Dorris Place put it succinctly when she said:

> The DRP itself won't teach a child to read, because there isn't enough application, continuous reading. They need to have continuity so we "supplement the DRP with other things."

Similarly, the reading resource teacher at Alta Loma explained that the DRP "doesn't translate into reading comprehension. We suggest teachers use it, say, two days a week, then spend the rest of the time with Harper Row." The school improvement coordinator at Alta Loma offered the same perspective:

> It's a false concept that you must use the DRP every day--one or two days a week for phonics, yes; then supplement with Harper Row. You want to move them into reading.

The same emphasis was evident at 42nd Street, where the faculty had selected the Ginn 720 Series, specifically because they judged that it was "strong" on comprehension skills.

To observe and verify that "an emphasis" on something exists in actual practice, of course, is difficult without spending a great deal of time on site. Nevertheless, the four schools' stress on reading for understanding was manifest in many ways.

In three of the four schools, "reading in the content areas" was a recurrent theme. Staff members reported that assignments in social studies, science, health, music, and so on were explicitly used to "reinforce" reading comprehension.

At Alta Loma, the incorporation of reading into all subjects was an objective in the school's School Improvement/Title I Plan. Furthermore, six different faculty members, on separate occasions, mentioned "reading in the content areas" as a feature of the school's program. A sixth grade teacher, for instance, explained:

> I think lots of teachers do it--maybe some more than others. In social studies and science we read as a group: I call on students, and ask questions. It's just another added practice.

The teachers at Elysian Heights--spontaneously in a faculty meeting on scheduling and reading, and again in interviews conducted several weeks later--pointed out that we're reading in health; we're doing reading in social studies; we're teaching reading all day. Observation suggested that teachers did, in fact, teach reading concepts while students were involved in subject-area assignments.

At Dorris Place, the reading coordinator explained that teachers had been encouraged to use subject-matter books as supplemental readers. At least some Dorris Place teachers apparently followed this practice. One, for instance, recounted using history material for reading. Another reported employing geography and science texts during reading time.

Teachers in the four schools brought students together with diverse reading materials in a wide variety of other ways. Teachers at both 42nd Street and Alta Loma described walking their classes to nearby libraries. Younger students at both schools were also participants in the Reading Is Fun(damental) Program, through which they were given books to read and to keep. Faculty members at both schools were trying to expand that program to other grades.

The sixth graders' reading teacher at Alta Loma required students to read a half-hour to an hour a day after school and to complete 50 books over the course of the year. He notified parents of these requirements and called for them to verify in writing when a book had been read. He also checked students' comprehension of the books with oral questions, having found written book reports "too much" for them.

The librarian at Dorris Place regularly read stories to class groups and sometimes brought in books from the public libra[illegible] and the Area 7 Multicultural Center at Buchanan Street school. Her multicultural program for fifth and sixth graders included such assignments as reading folktales. A bookmobile came regularly to the school, and the school librarian informed the bookmobile librarian in advance about the topics and stories she had been introducing.

Teachers at all schools emphasized that they regularly assigned a wide variety of reading materials in their classrooms. In their individual remarks on this topic, the themes, practice and comprehension cropped up once more.

Note: Fifth and sixth graders at Elysian Heights regularly read the Los Angeles Times' Student Outlook. Letters to the editor were regularly assigned. Reading to understand the articles was, of course, a prerequisite for writing the letters.

Note: As I watched a multi-grade reading class at Alta Loma, the teacher pointed out the stacks of Ranger Rick, National Geographic, and other reading matter throughout the room. "They love to read. If I let them, they'd sit here and read all day. When they're through with their books, they talk about them, read parts of them aloud, and draw about them." You've read the research," she added, "when kids are involved with their reading, they're reading words that are above their reading levels."

Note: When one sixth grade group at Dorris Place read about Frank Lloyd Wright, they translated their understanding of the text by designing houses. On other occasions, teams of students posed comprehension questions on assigned material to one another. "It's kind of a gimmick, I guess," the teacher commented with a shrug, "to slow down and work more with what they read."

There was similar evidence of the emphasis on reading-for-comprehension in classrooms throughout the four schools. Book report assignment sheets with comprehension questions were hanging in envelopes in two classrooms that I visited at 42nd Street. Completed reports were displayed on bulletin boards. As sixth-grade children entered the reading teacher's room at Alta Loma, four or five "understanding" questions were on the blackboard for reading groups to begin work on--a daily routine. As I watched a fifth-grade class at Dorris Place, the teacher went over tests with some groups and reviewed stories with others. He called each group in turn by the book they were reading and then asked students to read and answer questions. The thrust of each was comprehension of the text.

Finally, the emphasis upon reading comprehension was evident in the specific remarks of teachers as they described their personal aims and classroom programs. "We've taught the kids to do research...this is important. This is a kind of reading that is continuous," a sixth grade teacher at Alta Loma explained. "When they finish one project, they have another one. So there is emphasis. We do stress reading--reading and understanding." Describing their teaching in a joint interview, the sixth-grade teachers at Elysian Heights said, "We do a lot of interpretive reading; there's a lot of depth, especially in vocabulary and "comprehension." One teacher at Dorris Place concluded his enumeration of a long list of reading materials that he used with the statement, "The main thing is comprehension."

It was in the ways underscored above--taken together--that the four school's common emphasis on reading for understanding was most clearly evident in this study.

Here, it is worth pausing for a moment's consideration: How might close instructional attention to a continuum of reading skills, joined with an emphasis on reading comprehension, come to make a difference in students' learning?

The basic elements of effective reading instruction, psychological models suggest, are goal-setting, explanation, practice, and feedback.* Educational research supports the association of achievement with similar instructional components: clear goals, monitoring student's learning, tasks suited to students' abilities (i.e., tasks that permit high student success rates), more time engaged in such tasks and more feedback for students. These elements, it should be apparent, are designed into the reading curricula used in the four schools studied.

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*Instead of belaboring the text and reader with numerous citations, I refer the reader to a thorough review of theory and research literature (Center for the Study of Evaluation, 1981) which elaborates the points made in this discussion and includes specific references.

But the mere presence of a well-designed curriculum does not, of course, guarantee that students will learn to read well. Suppose, for instance, that a faculty sees a need to "bring up students' skills" and focuses exclusively or predominantly on discrete-skill (e.g., decoding-skill) assignments--in workbook, dittoed worksheets, and the like. In such a case, students would have little opportunity *to integrate* the individual skills they were learning and little chance to *practice them in the complex interrelationships* of actually reading and understanding. The same thing would be true in a school where students are assigned to read text, but where the continuum is followed dogmatically. There, the principal aim of reading text through the early elementary years, as specified by the continuum, would be decoding practice rather than comprehension of the text as a whole. In short, where continuua of reading skills are taken too literally (that is, where it is assumed that a child must be explicitly taught each individual skill on the continuum in turn), attention to the primary purpose of reading-understanding the text may be deferred until the learner has demonstrated mastery of each prerequisite skill discretely.* This may, in fact, unnecessarily delay practice and

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*Put another way: the suggestion here is that skills continuua represent general task analyses: analyses of the constitutive skills of reading-not plans for the instruction of each and every student. From this point of view, every child will need explicit instruction in some skills, but will learn others *as he/she reads.* When an individual student is having difficulty, then, the continuum serves as a *diagnostic tool.* It functions to help the teacher identify, given the student's performance, just what the trouble may be.

feedback on reading-for-understanding. From another perspective, a "lockstep" approach to a skills continuum increases the likelihood of students spending valuable instructional time practicing skills unsuited to their abilities.

That some faculties may focus predominantly on discrete skill assignments and/or take continuua quite literally as plans for the teaching of every student does not seem to be a far-fetched suggestion. Recall that the reading resource teacher at 42nd Street observed that some teachers at her school "still start on page one of the book and go through every page to page 300," assigning every story, instead of "testing them out...moving them up to a higher reading level" when "they show the potential." Recall, too, that the reading resource teacher at Alta Loma found it necessary to recommend that teachers use the Developmental Reading Program materials only two days a week and then spend the rest of the time with Harper Row, because (as she put it), "Some teachers in the lower grades are really 'gung-ho' on the DRP; they'll use it every day." If a few teachers in these schools continue to teach in these ways, it is not impossible that many more may do so in other schools.

The thrust of this section, then, is to suggest that the four schools studied seemed well on their way to avoiding the pedagogical pitfalls outlined above. Coordinators and many teachers appeared aware of and appeared to follow the diagnostic-prescriptive principles inherent in their reading programs. More than many other schools, perhaps, these four schools seemed to avoid the "lockstep" approach to skills continuua and reading instruction. Many staff members seem to have borne in mind and acted on the intended purpose of a skills continuum: to facilitate reading-with-understanding, not to replace it. There was an emphasis in each school, which seemed to be followed in practice, on moving students to the reading of text as soon as possible. And there were diverse and concerted efforts in each school to provide practice in reading-for-understanding in a wide range of reading materials.

2. Specialization of Instruction

Teachers in each of the four schools studied had some way of dividing responsibilities for the teaching of reading. In each case, the resulting specialization of instruction appeared to permit teachers to plan reading lessons more efficiently and thoroughly and to give each student more direct instructional time during the formal reading period.

Elementary schools are often organized so that all teachers teach reading to their own classes. This usually requires that each teacher address a broad range of reading skills and materials since at any given time the students in a classroom are working at many different points or levels in the reading curriculum. Dividing students by level for instruction, a teacher often has six, eight, or even more reading groups to teach daily. Planning appropriate lessons for each can require considerable time -- time compressed by the need to plan lessons in other subjects. The more reading groups there are in a class, the less time each can spend working directly with the teacher. This, of course, can influence the quality of teaching and learning. It can also lead to a redundancy of effort. Teachers in several classrooms can end up planning and teaching exactly the same reading skills, often using identical materials, at roughly the same time.

These and similar problems seemed to be ameliorated in the four schools studied by one or another system of instructional specialization.* Specialization was accomplished at two of the schools through a cooperative teaching, or teaming arrangement. In a third, the teaching of reading and basic skills subjects was departmentalized. And while each teacher at the fourth school did teach reading to his or her own class, a form of instructional specialization resulted in some classrooms where teachers and aides divided responsibilities in reading instruction. How each of these arrangements worked in the schools studied and their respective advantages and disadvantages are detailed below.

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*In this section, the generalizations regarding how reading was organized apply primarily to the upper grades (4 through 6) in each school, except where noted otherwise. Recall that I focused attention on the upper grades (especially sixth grade) on the grounds that median sixth-grade CTBS reading scores seemed likely to be more indicative of instruction in the higher grades (especially sixth) given student transiency rates in the schools. For a fuller explanation of this point, see Appendix A.

Teaming (also called leveling, rotation, and cooperative teaching). In this approach, teachers at several grades redistributed their students for reading so that each taught children working at only two or three levels in the curriculum. Each teacher in the grades involved specialized in teaching certain parts of the curriculum to multi-grade groups of pupils.

Elysian Heights Elementary School followed this procedure: rotating students at grades 5 and 6 among their teachers, and students in grades 3 and 4 among theirs. Some advanced third or fourth graders were included with the grade 5 and 6 groups. If teachers had kept their usual classes, each would have had students reading in about seven books (i.e., at seven levels) in the Houghton-Mifflin Series. With the rotation, each wound up with children working in two or three.

Students in kindergarten, first, and second grades at Elysian Heights studied reading with their usual teachers, but children were sometimes moved to a reading group in another class when the situation called for it.

A teaming or leveling approach had also been used at 42nd Street, during the years when test scores rose. Students there had been reassigned for reading according to their book (level) in the Ginn 720 series, with teachers in grades 1 through 3 dividing their students and those in grades 4 through 6 redistributing theirs. At the beginning of the 1980-81 school year, however, the principal directed that teachers return to the self-contained classroom approach, in which each teacher taught reading to his or her regular class. This system was in use during the exploratory study.

Finally, the fifth grade teachers at Alta Loma, in a slight variation of the approaches described so far, divided students within their grade by reading level. The steps of the Los Angeles Unified School District's Developmental Reading Program (DRP) were used as criteria in reassigning students to each of the four fifth-grade teachers for reading. Cross-grade teaming in grades 1 through 4 began at Alta Loma in 1980-81, but during the period for which test scores were available, those grades had used the self-contained classroom reading system.

The teachers that I spoke with who had participated in teaming for reading at both Elysian Heights and 42nd Street were nearly all heartily in favor of the system, especially in the upper grades. They found that it simplified planning, enabled them to give more in-class time to each reading group and facilitated their meeting learners' individual needs.

Note: After a series of classroom visits at 42nd Street, I met in the teachers' lunchroom with the teachers I had observed. "What you're seeing here," began one with five years experience at the school, "is not what went on for the past two years." Pointing at my notebook, she continued: "You put down that the teachers here feel strongly that the teaming approach or leveling approach helped raise our scores." The other two teachers nodded vigorously in agreement. "My kids are in so many books I sometimes don't see the teacher's edition for four or six weeks," one said, explaining that so many teachers needed the teacher's copy for each level of reader that it was hard to find one. Other planning problems were identified: "I have eight different levels in my room. It takes a long time just to find and give them the vocabulary they're supposed to cover in a particular story or unit.

Other teachers at 42nd Street voiced similar concerns.

Note: I visited a sixth-grade classroom during the scheduled reading period. As I entered, the teacher explained, "We're going to the library in a minute. You can come watch if you want." Then, as if to warn or prepare me, she added, "I have eight groups in here. I only get to see (i.e., meet and work with) three a day."

My visits to classrooms suggested that teaching groups at six or eight levels in the reading curriculum (which I observed at 42nd Street) was, indeed, more cumbersome than teaching groups at only two or three (as at Elysian Heights and Alta Loma).* Teachers routinely listed each group's assignment on the blackboard, but teachers with more groups appeared to spend more time reviewing the assignments, answering students' questions about them, and getting children situated and working at their seats before they called the first group over to begin their directed lesson. Keeping tabs on those working at their seats seemed, on the whole, to require more teacher time and effort where there were more groups. A greater number of groups meant more centers of activity distributed across more space in the classroom. Each was an individual point for the teacher to check on as, instructing one group in a corner of the room, she or he glanced up to see whether others were still down to working, whether there were questions, and so on. The larger number of different assignments also seemed to generate more questions for the teacher to answer since each assignment posed unique difficulties. Answering these questions and maintaining a working environment for each group seemed generally to consume more time in rooms where the number of reading groups was greater. All of this seemed to fragment the teacher's attention, detracting from the flow of instruction and increasing (or so it seemed) the amount of time and talk devoted to management.

Of course, some teachers with six or eight reading groups handled the multiplicity of activity more effectively than others. In one room, for example, a third-grade teacher got her six reading groups down to work with dispatch, and students engaged in their tasks with a minimum of explicit supervision. But even here, a small, peer-tutoring group in one corner finished their work and sat chatting quietly about summer vacation for over ten miutes as the teacher's attention was focused on instructing others. To be sure, instances of this kind also occurred in classrooms with only two or three reading groups. They appeared to be more frequent, however, where the number of groups was larger. And in any case, no matter how comfortably or effectively a teacher managed things, a larger number of reading groups meant a smaller amount of time for each to interact with the teacher during the formal reading period.

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*Recall that I was able to observe the teaming or leveling system in use in grades 1 through 4 at Alta Loma, even though the system was initiated to replace self-contained classroom reading in 1980-81.

Given all of this, teachers' overall preference for the teaming or leveling system seemed well-founded.

Arguments against teaming were presented by some staff members at 42nd Street, Elysian Heights, and Dorris Place (where teaming had been tried six or seven years previously). These arguments were similar from school to school. Significantly, they rarely denied the advantages of teaming for reading instruction. Rather, they were most often based on broader pedagogical and social concerns and values. The principal at 42nd Street summarized several of these when I asked her why she had called for a return to self-contained classroom instruction:

> Parents felt you had a lot of children walking around, a lot of movement (as students moved to other classes for reading), and they didn't always understand this... Then, too, if all the teachers agree to work together, plan together, you have continuity, but that doesn't always happen... Some teachers here also wanted their own children throughout the day so they could develop other skills with them, work on morals and manners. And I thought, they move around at junior high, there's so much transience throughout their lives--this gives them some stability... Children this age need to know one person to relate to. Plus it requires time for a teacher to work really in-depth with children.

The student's need for stability in his/her social environment, the integrity of each teacher's school-day program, continuity of the reading program across levels, and time lost in instruction in changing rooms comprised the case in favor of self-contained classroom reading when that case was made.

Note: I attended a mid-May faculty meeting at Elysian Heights in order to explain the purposes of the exploratory study. Quite by chance, the agenda also included a staff discussion of how reading instruction should be organized in the coming (1981-82) school year. When we continued a debate begun at a previous meeting, the exchange centered on the relative merits of the current "rotation" (teaming) approach and "homeroom reading." The Reading Resource Teacher, who chaired this portion of the meeting, introduced the topic by taping a summary of earlier comments on the blackboard:

ADVANTAGES:

READING ROTATION	HOMEROOM READING
1. Accommodates children of varied ability.	1. Each Houghton-Mifflin book spans several reading levels.
2. Requires fewer manuals and charts.	2. Teacher knows SES scores for grade and can teach to whole class as skills come up in reading.
3. Accommodates Spanish readers.	3. Teacher knows child's trouble spots and can work on them throughout day.
	4. No time lost in moving.
	5. Incomplete workbook pages can be completed in spare moments throughout day.
	6. Exchange with same grade or special situations could be worked out if span is too great.
	7. Reading program not halted when another teacher is on trip.
	8. Profiles are on hand and homework as well as class assignments can be tailored to needs.

What seemed to be an uninhibited discussion followed. Finally, primary-and upper-grade teachers were balloted separately, indicating their choices with raised hands. The vote was close in neither group. The Reading Resource Teacher summarized the results: " This tells us that the upper grades (4 through 6) will continue their rotations next year while the lower grades will maintain homeroom reading or work out special situations for those way above or below other children in their classes."

For their part, most primary-grade teachers at Elysian Heights seemed to feel that the continuity or consistency homeroom reading afforded was especially important, pedagogically and socially, for their younger students. In addition, some maintained, students in the primary classes were not working across as great a span of the reading curriculum as those in the higher grades: there was less advantage to teaming in their situations. But, they could always place an individual student or two in an appropriate reading group in another classroom as the need arose.

Upper-grade teachers, on the other hand, found that the rotation enabled them to "target in" more effectively on the needs of particular groups and individuals including the Spanish readers who had yet to transition to English reading. With the homeroom system, their comments indicated, they felt their time and energy were spread across too many groups. During the faculty meeting, and later on in individual interviews, they elaborated on these points, echoing the perspectives of 42nd Street teachers. Furthermore, they pointed out that concern for continuity of instruction throughout the school day (as represented by items numbered 2, 3, 5, and 8 on the chart reproduced above) were easily achieved under the rotation system "with good communication between teachers". They felt they had achieved good communication among themselves.

Two more points are worth noting before this section on teaming and its advantages and disadvantages is concluded. First, as previously footnoted, grades 1 through 4 at Alta Loma abandoned the homeroom reading approach in 1980-81 in favor of leveling (teaming). Teachers there with whom I discussed the change volunteered that they felt sure reading performance would improve as a result. Based on a few short observations, the system seemed to be working smoothly, e.g., student movement from one room to another did not seem to take a great deal of time; students' regular teachers appeared to know, and reported that they knew, about their students' strengths and weaknesses in reading.

Second, teaming had been tried at Dorris Place when the school first introduced the LAUSD Developmental Reading Program. Beginning with the upper grades, however, teachers gradually reverted to the homeroom reading approach. It is worth noting their reasons. Several staff members recalled that some teachers found that teaming reduced the flexibility of their individual schedules. As one classroom instructor explained:

> I couldn't say to another teacher, "My social studies lesson ran overtime, so I can't send you my kids (for reading) now." Every class didn't work the same way, on the same schedule.

But an important consideration for many teachers, the reading coordinator reported, had been that other options for specializing instruction were open, minimizing the advantages to be gained through teaming. Grades 1 and 2 were on a staggered day schedule: some students arrived earlier in the morning; others stayed later in the afternoon. This allowed teachers to focus on the needs of learners at different levels at different times of the day when those at other levels were not present. For other teachers, the library was available as a learning center. They could and did send "one or two groups at a time" there during reading to work at reading and in related skills centers maintained by an "aide-librarian." Finally, classroom aides began, under teachers' supervision, to undertake a larger instructional role in some classrooms. Thus, Dorris Place teachers moved away from teaming, but they did so in circumstances that afforded many of the same benefits that teaming seems to offer. With this background, their choice of homeroom reading cannot be construed as evidence against the worth of teaming. Rather, it seems to confirm that teachers find some division of responsibilities for reading instruction to be helpful.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that teaming, leveling, or rotation is one way of specializing instruction that seems to facilitate the teaching -- and perhaps the learning of reading. More time for teacher preparation (planning lessons, providing feedback on students' written work, etc.) can lead to better teaching. Recent research suggests that the more time students spend working directly with their teacher -- interacting with the teacher during lessons or engaged in tasks under his/her immediate superivision -- the better students do. Teaming appears to facilitate more teacher planning time and more student time with the teacher during formal reading lessons. Both the preponderance of experience-based opinion and the limited observational evidence gathered in the exploratory study suggest that this is the case.

Departmentalization. In the second approach to specialized reading instruction, one classroom teacher at a given grade taught reading to all the students in that grade. Reciprocally, that teacher's grade-level colleagues assumed responsibility for teaching the entire grade in other basic skills subjects.

This system was used at Alta Loma Elementary School in the sixth grade. Every morning, each of three sixth-grade classes spent an hour each in the reading teacher's classroom.* While one class was there, a second class was studying math with another teacher; the third class studied language arts with the third teacher. In a little over three hours each day, then, the entire grade received specialized instruction in three basic skills areas.

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*A fourth, bilingual sixth-grade class and its teacher did not join in the departmental system.

How might departmentalized teaching help improve students' learning? The teacher who initiated the approach in Alta Loma's sixth-grade suggested one way as she described how it all got started:

> When we went to departmentalized teaching, we went to people's competence in a specific subject area...

The sixth-grade teachers mutually decided which of them was strongest or most competent in each subject area. When a sixth-grade teacher left the school, they sought a replacement with a particular interest and strength in that teacher's subject area specialization. Thus, all sixth-grade learners were exposed to the teacher deemed most competent in each basic subject.

Departmentalization can also afford each teacher more time to plan and otherwise prepare in his/her specialty. Although the reading teacher had to teach students working at many levels in the curriculum, he had to prepare for only one subject rather than three. Often, he could use lessons planned for reading groups in one class with groups reading at the same level in other classes. He seemed to have time, then, to plan those lessons more reflectively and fully, as well as more time to attend to particular students' individual problems and needs. And, although the teacher himself didn't mention it, he may also have had the chance to fine-tune his plans and teaching strategies in teaching the same skills and stories in successive classes.

The participating teachers had also found that departmentalization acted as a catalyst for closer cooperation and collaboration. They met informally during most lunch hours -- working out common goals, discussing students' progress and problems, and keeping one another up to date on topics and assignments in their subject specialties. As a result, said the teacher who specialized in math said:

> Our goals for reading are common goals. And if they haven't done their reading work, they have me to answer to, too.

Lunchtime meetings also served as a forum for exchanging teaching ideas. "We've got the best of three minds working in each classroom," one reported.

The close collaboration that this group achieved may not follow necessarily from a departmental organization. But it seems likely, as these teachers maintained, that departmentalization can act as a catalyst to -- and a vehicle for the more efficient implementation of -- common goals, shared ideas, and collective responsibility for student performance and learning. These, in turn, probably influence the quality of children's classroom experience and achievement.

In summary, the departmentalized system may well have had a bearing on Alta Loma sixth-graders' improved reading test performance in that it : (1) permitted the sixth-grade teacher deemed most competent in reading instruction to teach all sixth graders in reading,* (2) allowed the teacher more time for preparation, and (3) facilitated a collaborative, and more fully integrated, instructional effort on the part of sixth-grade teachers.

Division of Responsibilities between teacher and aide. As I have already noted, teachers at Dorris Place Elementary School followed the self-contained classroom approach, teaching reading to the regular classes. But it appeared that in many classrooms, particularly in the upper grades, aides and teachers shared responsibilities for reading instruction. A kind of teacher-aide team teaching resulted, and it seemed to afford some of the same benefits that the other systems of instructional specialization provided.

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*With the exception of the sixth graders in the bilingual classroom.

Note: Coming up the stairs onto the second floor during an early visit to Dorris Place, I immediately noticed clusters of children here and there along the corridor, seated in chairs around adults. Just to my left, where the hallway widened at the top of the staircase, a woman and five students were gathered around a table with LAUSD Developmental Reading Program (DRP) materials. Further along, another group had DRP workbooks open on their knees. Nearly opposite the latter, just outside another classroom door, two youngsters and an instructor conversed in Spanish, the instructor gesticulating toward a reading worksheet that absorbed their attention. And as I approached a fourth group at the far end of the hallway, it became clear that they too were at work on a DRP lesson. The murmur of each group's voices did little to disturb the tranquility of the corridor. A number of classroom doors were open. Passing them, I heard teachers directing reading and language arts lessons.

Further visits to Dorris Place put what I had observed into perspective. The scene recurred routinely in the second-floor hallway, along which upper-grade classrooms were located. The adults at work with the students were aides. The aides were for the most part, not merely providing a bit of extra help. Rather, they had primary responsibility for conducting skills-oriented instruction with DRP materials--always with the teachers' continuing supervision and management and in the context of a program of inservice training for the aides.

One sixth-grade teacher explained in an interivew that his three-hour aide worked exclusively in reading with the DRP, taking his students aside in three groups and teaching each group for an hour every day. Meanwhile, he concentrated on students' reading-for-comprehension in a wide range of materials. The aide in a combined fifth-and-sixth-grade class usually spent her three hours working with six ESL students.* Using DRP materials and taking the students to the hallway or a bookroom, the aide devoted an hour each to tutoring "the two (ESL students) who are more advanced, one who is the least advanced, and then the other three." In yet another sixth-grade room, the aide worked in DRP materials for an hour a day with three ESL students and then gave an hour of DRP instruction to each of two other groups. Simultaneously, the classroom teacher was spending his time with the remainder of the class in Bank Street series reading groups and in language arts lessons.

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*Students learning English as a second language with an ESL specialist.

While I was unable to tally just how many teachers and aides divided their instructional efforts along the lines described above, it appeared that those in at least five upper-grade classrooms did so.* And whatever roles the aides in other classes played, a good many seemed to devote the greater part of their time to assisting teachers in some way with reading instruction. Staff members throughout the school, moreover, repeatedly emphasized how important educational aides were to the "success" of the reading program at Dorris Place.**

Where aides did share the kinds of instructional responsibilities outlined above, the same advantages resulted as those derived from the teaming or leveling approach described earlier. During the reading period, both the teacher and the aide needed to be concerned at any one time with a group of students less diverse in reading ability. (Students at some levels were supervised by the aide, and others were with the teacher.) As in teaming, this gave the teacher (and aide) a greater opportunity to target instruction to some students' individual strengths and weaknesses with fewer other groups to supervise simultaneously. Where students received daily assistance from the aide with the DRP and from the teacher in basal readers or similar material, each student's instructional time was increased. And under the latter arrangement, the teacher (and aide) had more planning time available than would have been the case if the teacher alone had had to manage instruction in both readers and the DRP. In short, it would seem that many of the same relationships suggested between other forms of specialized instruction and students' reading achievement may apply again here. The changing of responsibilties between teachers and aides in some classrooms at Dorris Place could well have influenced sixth-graders' reading scores.

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*For a number of reasons that need not be mentioned here, I spent somewhat less time at Dorris Place than at the other three schools. Furthermore, the conditions, practices, and themes that presented themselves at Dorris Place at first seemed anomalous when compared with some obvious commonalities in the other three schools. Examining these apparent anomalies (or seeming discrepancies in the pattern of conditions at higher scoring schools) consumed considerable time; and when upon further investigation they appeared not to be anomalous at all, I was left with little time to gather detail on the commonalities I had begun to see.

In any case, my estimate of five classrooms, as well as my generalization that many aides seemed to play a larger role in reading than in other subject areas, is grounded in the number of different groups I saw working simultaneously outside classrooms, teachers impromptu remarks to me and to each other, and staff members remarks in formal interviews.

**Emphasis on the aides' importance may, at least, in part have been generated by the school's impending loss of Title I funds, some 90% of which (the Title I/Reading Coordinator reported) went for aides and other support. (See the brief description of Dorris Place in Appendix B. It now seems that Title I funding will remain available.) This speculation, however, must be balanced against the observational evidence indicating the aides did, in fact, play a major role in reading instruction.

In concluding this section, a brief review is in order.
The case presented here has suggested that where teachers assume the predominant responsibility for teaching reading to students working across a broad range of curricular levels following a self-contained classroom organization, conditions are often generated that handicap a teacher's instructional efforts. But in the upper (and sometimes primary) grades during a period when their median sixth-grade reading scores rose, the four elementary schools studied purposively avoided the self-contained classroom reading structure. They employed systems of instructional specialization in

which teachers (or teachers and aides) shared responsibilities for teaching reading. (See chart below.)

Teaming or leveling, departmentalization, and teacher and aide sharing the teaching operated in different ways. But the evidence of this exploratory study indicates they seem to have ameliorated some, if not all, of the problems associated with self-contained classroom reading. In particular, they appeared to have allowed teachers more preparation time for each reading group's lesson and more time to interact with and supervise students during periods of formal reading instruction. Educational research (e.g., Berliner, 1979; Roseshine, 1976; Stallings, 1980) indicates relationships between the amount of teacher-student interactional time and test scores as well as between supervised work time and achievement. Logic

SCHOOL	ORGANIZATION OF READING INSTRUCTION*	GRADE(S)
Alta Loma	Departmentalization	6
	Teaming/Leveling	5
	Self-Contained Classroom Reading+	K-4
Dorris Place	Self-Contained Classroom Reading with Teachers and Aides Sharing Responsibilities	4-6 K-3(?)
Elysian Heights	Teaming/Leveling	3-6
	Self-Contained Classroom Reading with Exceptions for Individuals as Needed	K-2
42nd Street	Teaming/Leveling++	1-6
	Self-Contained Classroom Reading	K

*Through the 1978-79 and 1979-80 school years
+Switched to teaming/leveling, 1980-81
++Switched to self-contained classroom reading, 1980-81

dictates the supposition that more teacher planning time can lead to more effective teaching and improved student learning.

Thus, when schools are given the increased planning and instruction time and other attendant benefits, the presence of systems for instructional specialization could well have had a bearing on the four schools comparatively high test scores in reading.

3. Experienced Teachers with High Standards and Expectations.

A cadre of experienced teachers with high standards and expectations for student performance was present in each of the four schools studied. These teachers shared a belief in their students capacity to learn and learn well, even though social and economic circumstances in students' lives outside school were often difficult. Their demeanor toward students and their teaching actions seemed to follow from this belief. They appeared routinely to be supportive and encouraging when students were having trouble. They seemed to work hard to help students learn. Together with their students, they seemed to maintain a positive, work-oriented environment in the classroom. They assigned substantial amounts of classwork and homework and held students accountable for completing it. And the assignments they gave seemed to credit students with competence. In short, the beliefs and behaviors of these teachers appeared to facilitate student achievement.

Staff members in the four schools visited knew the reason for my presence among them. They had been reminded that their schools' reading test scores were relatively high and told that I as coming to see what might account for their schools' "success."* Naturally, then, a good many staff members offered me their own accounts of why their schools' reading scores were as high as they were. And in suggesting possible reasons for their schools' higher scores, administrators and faculty members at each school consistently listed their "strong," experienced teachers, particularly those in the upper grades.

Not many minutes into our first interview, for instance, the principal at Alta Loma told me: "We have strong fifth- and sixth-grade teachers, in terms of experience and work with children... the teacher who teaches reading is quite strong..." The assistant principal nodded his agreement with these observations. Later on, two of Alta Loma's program coordinators independently offered the same view.

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*Details on how the study was explained to staff members; the reasons for explaining it in this way, and the methodological implications of this explanation appear in Appendix A.

At Elysian Heights, the principal turned the first interview to the topic of possible reasons for the higher sixth-grade medians:

> We have two *very* good sixth-grade teachers, *very* strong, which I think makes a difference. They pound hard on the things that children need to learn... We've had the same sixth-grade teacher since 1971. His children are there in the room for a half-hour or more after school ... he's here at seven and never leaves till five or five thirty. The fifth-sixth teacher has been here four or five years or more, and he's another hard-working teacher. Their children go home loaded down with homework.

Three other classroom teachers and the reading resource teacher at Elysian Heights individually concurred with these opinions. The sixth-grade teachers, in turn, spoke of "the fine teachers and fine program, especially in the lower grades. By the time they (the students) get here (to sixth grade), they're very well prepared."

The Dorris Place principal complimented his school's Title I and reading coordinator as "simply outstanding," and spoke of the "very, very fine, and highly experienced teachers these sixth-graders have." He continued by elaborating on their years of experience and "highly professional" qualities.

At 42nd Street, there had been considerable faculty turn-over between 1979-80 and 1980-81. Of seven fifth- and sixth-grade classrooms, six had teachers in their first year at the school. The principal noted these staff changes, citing the "loss" of some "good, tenured, and very experienced teachers in the upper two grades." And a fourth-grade teacher echoed the words of several faculty members when she said:

> One thing the past two years was, we had sixth-grade teachers here who were very strong--especially one teacher; everyone felt she was great. But there's only one of them left here now.

One of the "new" sixth-grade teachers, sitting nearby, nodded in agreement. "That's right," she added, "they were really excellent." Other staff members who had just come to the school also voiced the common belief that the former teachers were largely responsible for 42nd Street's improved test performance. As I left one new fifth-grade teacher's class after an observation, she walked into the hall with me and said:

> Do you know what you've walked into here? The teachers who raised the scores have all gone back to the Valley!*

And a sixth-grade teacher whose classroom I asked to visit replied:

> You can come anytime. I know what you're doing, but I'm not one of the ones who made the scores go up.

Across the schools studied, then, there was a consensus that certain "strong" experienced teachers were an important factor in their students' reading achievement.

Upper-grade teachers in the four schools, I discovered, had in fact spent a good many years in the classroom. Teachers in the sixth-grade classes, for example, had been teaching for the following numbers of years: 21, 25, 10, 28, 21, 23, 6, and 17.** Similarly, those who coordinated the reading programs at each school had been educators for 17, 22, 10 and 29 years, and many of the other staff members I spoke with were as experienced as these.

Identifying exactly what speakers had in mind when they called teachers "strong," "good," and "excellent" was more difficult than determining what they meant by "experienced." Those whom I interviewed treated the definitions of these terms as part of "what everyone knows." When asked to elaborate on the qualities of "strong" teachers, they expressed what I interpreted as puzzlement or annoyance. "You know what I mean," they sometimes replied. In other instances, they changed the topic. Thus, I was rarely able to ascertain just what their definitions of "strong" or "good" teachers entailed. But as I observed and interviewed the teachers who had been designated strong and experienced, I discerned several things they seemed to have in common.

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*A number of the faculty members who had been at 42nd Street during 1978-79 and 1979-80 had volunteered to teach there for a two-year period as part of the District's desegregation program. They then returned to their former schools.

**This list includes only those sixth-grade teachers who were present in the schools in 1979-80 and in 1980-81, when I conducted the exploration. It also omits the teacher of the bilingual sixth-grade class at Alta Loma, whom I never managed to meet.

The "strong, experienced" teachers I talked with often spoke about, and reported having, "high expectations" and/or "high standards" for students.. And there was a considerable commonality from teacher to teacher and school to school in how these terms were elaborated and used.

One component of high expectations was a belief that the students in the school could, in fact, learn.

Note: As a program coordinator at Alta Loma took me to various classrooms for introductions and to explain my research goals, teachers often stopped to chat with me for a minute or two. In one sixth-grade classroom, the teacher (a twenty-two year veteran), explained: "We have high expectations here for these students... I know there's a lot of stuff going on out there (in students' lives) but that's stuff you can use to make it (schooling) work, not an excuse for its not working... We believe in making the learner responsible. One person can make a difference in their lives. We set realistic goals and look for realistic successes."

My second interview with Alta Loma's sixth-grade reading teacher turned to a similar theme. In the middle of our conversation, unprompted, he said:

> The primary grades are raising students' performance up a little each year... (and at the sixth grade) we have high expectations. We don't say to students "you're going to try to do it"; we say "you're going to do it ..." When I first came here, the standards of some of the former teachers weren't that high. Students thought they never had to care about where things went, about neatness. They didn't think they should have homework. But you can't come to these schools and say, "These poor kids have so many problems, we can't expect too much of them."

These teachers' perspectives were shared by many of their Alta Loma colleagues. In the midst of showing me different approaches for developing beginning reading skills with students, the School Improvement Program coordinator remarked,

> ...So you have a variety of ways of doing it. And you keep trying. Someplaces they may try it one way, two ways, five ways, then they give up. They conclude these kids can't learn. But they can learn. The teacher just has to find a way.

The reading resource teacher at 42nd Street Elementary School was in strong agreement with the latter perspective. In a matter-of-fact way, she reported:

> As long as I've been coordinator, we haven't had one non-reader. We do have the low-producing child, the child with a poor attitude. But we believe somewhere, somehow, someway, the children can learn. It's up to us to find that way.

The one teacher remaining from the 1978-1980 fifth- and sixth-grade faculty at 42nd Street School spoke in a similar vein. Explaining both her and a former sixth-grade teacher's common approach, she said:

> Both the other teacher and I were experienced. We both had high expectations and emphasized accountability. There was the idea we both projected that what you (the students) are doing in class is important. And we both gave a great deal of positive reinforcement... There were the weekly progress reports to each student and the constant badgering the kids that they're important ... You're not a social worker, you're not a cop, you need to get through this, recognize this, before you work in a school like this... But you try to emphasize that each student is competing with himself to learn and grow. And you pound hard on the basics.

The comments quoted here elaborate a philosophy that seemed widely shared among the teachers labeled experienced and strong in all four schools. Together, they held that the students in their schools were competent to learn. The job of the teacher was to find ways to tap that competence: to find ways to help students translate it into peformance, achievement. (Some of the efforts that these teachers made to do this have been indicated above in the discussion headed, "Skills, Plus an Emphasis on Comprehension." Others will appear in passing in this and other sections of the report.

But the "high expectations" and "high standards" of the four schools' upper-grade teachers were more than a matter of beliefs. They were also evident in the teachers' pedagogical actions. These teachers seemed to require their students to do substantial amounts of classwork and homework--and established consequences for those who did not complete assignments. They encouraged students constantly to do their best.

Note: In a joint interview, the two sixth-grade teachers at Elysian Heights began to discuss some of the assignments they had given through the year. "I'm very demanding," said one. "I think we have higher standards here than some other schools." He went on to explain that the Elysian Heights Student Council had recently exchanged visits to a suburban, Orange County School. In preparation for the exchange, student council members wrote letters to one another. "We went over those letters almost ten times, correcting the sentences, correcting the spelling, correcting everything. And you should have seen the ones we got back. They were beat up, torn letters -- all smudged -- no pride at all. They should have been embarrassed to let their kids send those things out." Several students and the principal, on separate occasions, volunteered information that confirmed both how hard the Elysian Heights students had been required to work on their letters and how surprised they had been with the ones they received.

This incident seemed to summarize much about the instruction at Elysian Heights. Numerous letter-writing assignments included multiple revisions. In addition to the work in Houghton-Mifflin, sixth-grade students were regularly assigned the Reading Bonus and the Student Outlook from Los Angeles Times. The assignments listed on the teachers' blackboards seemed longer, and perhaps more demanding, than many I had seen in elementary schools in reputedly "good" suburban school districts. Several sixth-graders I picked at random allowed me to leaf through their notebooks; the contents (with each paper amply "corrected" and in the neat order the teacher required) supported the latter impression.

The Elysian Heights principal explained the school's homework policy:

> We give homework four days a week: two days of reading, two days of math, then spelling and other things. The teachers load them down. We get the parents used to it early, emphasize that parents should help the children find a quiet study place - we have a newsletter with information on what they can do... One night a week, in third through sixth grades, there is dictionary homework. Each child is given a paperback dictionary to keep...

One upper-grade teacher reviewed this policy for me, adding that homework was not supposed to be assigned over the weekend. Having said so, he turned to a colleague and smiled: "Of course, you can assign extra work on Thursday night that's due on Monday." Smiling back, his colleague replied, "Yes, that sometimes happens."

Evidence that a good deal of work was required of students -- and that work got done--was everywhere at Elysian Heights: on bulletin boards, in students notebooks, in piles of students' letters ready to be mailed, in the books students carried home with them after school, and elsewhere.

This type of evidence also appeared throughout the classrooms I visited at Dorris Place and Alta Loma, as well as in the rooms of teachers who had been at 42nd Street for some years. In all those schools, many teachers' assignments and routine classroom procedures seemed to tell students, "You can do it -- and you will do it."

Note: Meeting a Dorris Place teacher in her room after school, I found a handful of students busily at work. Later on in our conversation, the teacher explained, "Students get homework every day: English four days; math every day - 2 or 3 pages; spelling - I assign that for a week and reading pages... Some stay after school to work, mostly boys, because they don't like to carry books home.

Note: Papers' displayed on bulletin boards; assignment sheets lying on teachers' desks and tables, work listed daily on blackboards and other artifacts at Alta Loma indicated that students were completing book reports, research papers (on ancient civilizations, Black history, European history) and many other assignments. The sixth-grade teacher who specialized in reading commented, "We hit them with a lot of homework" and went on to say "they stay in at recess, lunch, whenever, to do it if they don't have it done." (I had already observed the latter policy in practice.) He himself required each sixth grader to read 50 books a year outside school. Letters went home to families outlining the requirement and letting them know that their child was expected to read for "a half-hour to an hour" every night. "I take them to the public library, or they can buy books through Arrow. The book should last them a week and be at their level. If it doesn't last them a week, they can pick two books," the teacher said. Parents were required to verify in writing that a book was completed. "But I also tell them (the students) that I can ask them questions on any book -- and I "X" it off their list if they can't answer them," he added. He went on to explain that all students didn't finish all 50 books, "but you have to set your demands high. One read maybe twenty, but he'll go ahead (to junior high)."

When I had had opportunities to spend time in classrooms at the four schools, I noticed that high standards and expectations for students' performance were also manifest in teacher-student interaction. Teachers -- those explicitly called strong by their colleagues and also most others I observed in each school -- seemed to collaborate with their students in maintaining what is usually referred to as a "task-oriented" classroom environment.

Note: I dropped in unannounced one day on the one sixth-grade teacher who had been at 42nd Street when the test scores rose. A grammar lesson was in progress. "We're all doing the same thing as a whole class to get ready for junior high school," the teacher told me. "We're not seated in groups any more." All the children but two were facing the teacher, who fired off review questions to students here and there around the classroom. "Shawn, give me the definition of an action verb." Shawn replied. "Very good. Now a predicate noun." Hands went up, nine or ten with each quesiton. The teacher called on a student looking out of the window. No answer. More hands raised, but the teacher gave the window-gazer another opportunity, repeating the question. Soon students were directed to take out books. The teacher assigned two grammar exercises. There was some shuffling about: not all students had books. But nearly all were quickly down to work, with some side conversations between those sharing a text. The teacher spoke: "See if you can finish 'Let's see about' before we go to lunch." Most students completed both exercises: "Mrs. ____ , I finished mine"; "Me too"; "I did 'em both"; etc. The class got ready for lunch, the teacher turned to me and said, "They're so hyper at the end of the year." I replied that they sure went to work on the exercises. "This has to do with the expectation level and accountability -- after they've been with me for a year. They also know that if they don't finish the work, they don't go out for recess," the teacher told me. Then, she moved the group to the cafeteria, using Assertive Discipline techniques.*

Note: The teacher in a fourth-grade classroom at Dorris Place designated a student to show me around the clasroom and explain what was going on. Tables were set one behind the other to the left and right of the room's center, in a vee-shaped pattern. Each table had a label, and four, five, or six children were at work at each. My student guide explained, "This is EFA. It's individualized. We do these cards, then there's follow-ups that ask questions on the stories. Back here is book reports. It's a contract system. You get prizes and a bonus if it's a hard book." Fortunately, the teacher elaborated that students were at work on five-week contracts in reading and, simultaneously, on language arts assignments. What had at first glance seemed confusing, clarified as I watched. Each table contained materials from a different curricular program. (About six were in use.) Students worked for awhile at each, chatting occasionally, until they finished a particular task. Then, gathering their materials up in their cardboard briefcases, they moved on to another table, perhaps the DRP table, perhaps the one reserved for free reading or the one for "catch up." Students appeared to know exactly where they needed to go and what they needed to do. They proceeded through their successive tasks with few explicit directions from the teacher, who spent her time instructing individuals and looking over completed work that students brought to her.

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*Assertive Discipline techniques include the use of tokens for positive reinforcement. In this class, marbles were awarded when the teacher explicitly stated one would be given and when everyone in the class carried out her directive in the manner specified. Students determined what the marble was to stand for or "buy", e.g., five minutes extra free time.

The tone and style of various classes I visited varied. But almost all teachers and their students seemed successfully to have negotiated systems of standards for classroom social and academic performance. Either explicitly (as in the first example above) or implicitly (as in the second), there was a clear emphasis upon getting the job done and doing it well in each classroom I visited at Alta Loma, Dorris Place and Elysian Heights. The same was true in the classes of those teachers that I observed at 42nd Street who had been at the school for several years.

And as staff members in those classrooms reviewed students' work and supervised students' interaction, I seemed frequently to hear them make comments such as: "Is this your best?"; "I know you can do better"; and "Let's improve on that." Asked or stated matter-of-factly, these remarks seemed at once to acknowledge students' competence and to sustain high expectations and standards for their performance.

Now, I will summarize and consider how what has been described above might bear on the four schools' reading test scores.

Personnel in each of the schools claimed that their faculty included a group of notably strong, experienced teachers (especially at the upper grades) whose work helped their reading scores rise. In terms of years in the classroom, the schools' upper grade teachers (and some other staff members) were indeed experienced. And they seemed to maintain high expectations and standards for students.

High expectations and standards appeared to embody:

(1) a view of students as competent learners;

(2) a commitment to finding ways to help children learn (evident in teachers' working hard, staying late at school to give extra help, using diverse materials and teaching strategies, etc.);

(3) a practice of giving substantial amounts of classwork and homework;

(4) measures to assure that the work assigned got done;

(5) A concern that students work be of high quality (apparent in requirements to re-do assignments, in teachers' feedback on work, etc.);

(6) the maintenance of a "task-oriented" classroom environment;

(7) a generally positive demeanor in interaction with students (manifested in positive reinforcement and/or remarks routinely acknowledging students as capable learners).

Intuitively, it makes sense to suppose the presence of many teachers who held these beliefs and took these actions had something to do with higher test scores. Educational research tends to support this supposition. Rosenthal's (1968) work on the Pygmalion or self-fulfilling prophecy effect, though methodologically controversial, suggests that teachers' beliefs in students' capabilities can lead to improved student performance. Other studies have shown relationships between teachers' "sense of efficacy" (i.e., their belief that their efforts can make a difference in students' learning) and beneficial educational outcomes (Berman and McLaughlin, 1977). Giving many and substantive work assignments, assuring that they are completed,and sustaining a work-oriented classroom environment would appear to assure increasing students' engaged on-task time and maximizing the amount of practice students obtain on various skills. (Research which relates the latter to student achievement has already been cited.) And still other studies indicate that a positive classroom climate (e.g., minimal criticism, greater incidence of positive feedback) correlates with higher student test performance (Rosenshine, 1976; Soars and Soars, 1979). Thus, the hypothesis of staff members throughout the four schools that their cadres of strong, experienced teachers contributed to their schools' higher reading scores makes sense not only intuitively, but also in light of extant research.

4. Stability of the Reading Program and Key Staff Members Over Time

> In each of the four schools studied, central elements of the reading program and at least a nucleus of key staff members had been present for a number of years. The continuance of both program and staff might have contributed to more consistent and effective reading instruction in these schools.

Circumstances through the years have contributed to frequent staff and program changes in many Los Angeles Title I elementary schools. In this context, key personnel and central reading-program features seemed relatively constant in the schools studied.

At Alta Loma, three of the four program coordinators had been on the faculty for about ten years. The fourth, who coordinated the bilingual program, had come to Alta Loma at the very outset of that program four years ago. The teacher who had initiated and seemed to play a major role in sustaining the sixth-grade departmentalized system had been at the school for sixteen years. Her colleague who specialized in reading instruction in sixth grade had been teaching at Alta Loma for six years before departmentalization and the adoption of the Developmental Reading Program schoolwide. The principal was new to the school in February, 1981, but the woman he had replaced had served there for five years. Staff members who had seen a succession of short-term principals through the early 1970's cited her five-year tenure as a source of stability in the school.

In general, Alta Loma had had minimal staff turnover since integration of the faculty four years ago. Most of the White teachers who at that time had volunteered to come to the school had stayed on.

This staff worked with Harper Row basal series materials that had been used at Alta Loma for several years. And while the LAUSD Developmental Reading Program (DRP) was adopted schoolwide in 1976-77, many of the teachers had used DRP materials even earlier.

At Elysian Heights, the key administrative figure was the principal, who had guided the school for twenty years. Of her upper-grade teachers, two were in their first year. But the others had been four-and-a-half, eight, ten, and eleven years at Elysian Heights. (The eleven-year veteran was a sixth-grade teacher who seemed to play a central role in many school activities.) The second-third grade teacher was also a ten-year member of the faculty. Thus, a considerable proportion of the staff in the higher grades had been at the school at least since the adoption of the Houghton-Mifflin reading curriculum four-and-a-half years ago. (It had been only three years since the reading resource teacher had come to Elysian Heights, but she had had many years experience elsewhere in the District. The same was true of the Title I/School Improvement and Bilingual Program coordinators.)

The Dorris Place principal (ending his second year at the school) reported that a third of his teaching staff was new to the school in the past year. But he went on to explain that most of the changes had occurred in the primary grades, leaving the school with a core of continuing fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade instructors. The three who taught sixth-graders in 1980-81, for instance, had been on the Dorris Place faculty for six, ten, and twenty-eight years, respectively. Those working at the fifth-grade level had taught there nine and seven years. The woman who coordinated the school's reading program and Title I program had spent her entire ten years in education at Dorris Place; the last three in the coordinator's role. And the School Improvement Program coordinator had had three years' experience in that job and nine altogether at Dorris Place.

No one with whom I spoke at Dorris Place could recall exactly when the LAUSD Developmental Reading Program (DRP) had been introduced. Most, however, agreed that it had been six or eight years ago.

Overall, then, program materials and key personnel had been together for at least four or five years in each of the three study schools where sixth-grade median reading scores had held or climbed above the 50th percentile. Many of the teachers, moreover, had much more time at these schools.

This kind of program -- staff continuity -- it would seem, could facilitate consistency and effectiveness in reading instruction. Teachers had had time to become familiar with program materials, to know their strengths and weaknesses, to discover which needed to be adapted and how to adapt them for use with particular types of students. Coordinators had had time to provide teachers with staff development on their curricula and to assist those who needed help in using materials as intended. There had been time, too, for coordinators and classroom teachers to refine their programs' continuity from reading level to reading level and grade to grade. Impromptu remarks and interview responses suggested that staff members had, in fact, made efforts of the sort listed here.

When the LAUSD reading continuum appeared two years ago, coordinators and many teachers in these schools alreay had had the chance to develop a good working knowledge of their reading materials. This may have facilitated the work undertaken to fit their particular curricula with the District continuum.

That it does take time to do all the above -- to accomplish a smooth, articulated instructional program which teachers follow and adapt -- was evident explicitly and implicitly in staff members' remarks. In accounting for Alta Loma's progressively rising sixth-grade reading scores, the reading resource teacher (21 years experience, all in Los Angeles; ten at her present school; functioning as reading program coordinator) said:

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> We've attained some consistency. We have experienced, strong personnel -- it takes new teachers a couple of years to get themselves together and to get to know a program. Plus we've had the same personnel working. So there's consistency in the program and in the personnel, both.

The School Improvement Program coordinator (a former second-grade teacher with nine year experience, all at Alta Loma) seconded this point:

> We have a good, stable staff here. Since we've started this (reading) program, we've had the same teachers. It helps when a school has that kind of stability.

Similarly, the sixth-grade teacher with twenty-eight years at Dorris Place commented:

> We've had a succession of teachers but there's been continuity, too, and that's very important...

On various occasions during the study, too, coordinators spoke about the need for staff development on new programs. They stated and implied that with time, more teachers on a faculty tend to "understand," "get with," "work into," and "use" the school's program. And they mentioned the need for "inservicing" teachers new to a school on the reading program in use, even when the "new" teacher had considerable classroom experience. Remarks such as these support the notion that it does take time for teachers and program to come together in well-articulated, smooth, and effective reading instruction.

So, too, do the impromptu comments of several teachers new to 42nd Street in 1980-81. "I'm still learning the system here," said one. "It's taken us awhile to learn the new curriculum," explained a second on another occasion. In a joint interview, the reading and math resource teachers cited "teacher transiency" as "one of the things we have to deal with here."

The reading resource teacher at 42nd Street seemed to play a significant role in the school as coordinator of the reading program. (The principal pointed out that, "she works closely with the teachers.")

Twenty-one of the resource teacher's twenty-nine years in education were spent at 42nd Street. The program she was currently guiding, centered on the Ginn 720 reading series with workbooks and tests and supplementary "booster" materials, was in its fifth year of use. These features were similar to those in the three other schools studied.

But the upper-grade classroom teachers who worked with this curriculum had, on the whole, no longevity at 42nd Street. All three of the fourth-grade teachers had been at the school for three years or more in 1980-81. But as previously reported, six of the seven fifth- and sixth-grade teachers were new to the school in that same school year. More significantly, at least four of the six they had replaced had served only two years at 42nd Street (i.e., through 1978-79 and 1979-80). The remaining sixth-grade teacher was completing only her third year at the school. Thus, while 42nd Street shared some features of program and staff stability with the other three study schools, there were seemingly important features of this stability that it did not share with them.

It would be easy to rationalize this apparent discrepancy in the general pattern. Sixth-grade medians at 42nd Street crept upward, but they did not rise as dramatically as, or attain the height of, those in the other study schools. The resource teacher coordinating the reading program seemed highly knowledgeable about reading instruction and the program at 42nd Street. She appeared highly expert in the coordinator's role, and she provided staff development for the teachers new to the shcool. Those teachers, in turn, were viewed by their colleagues as highly skilled.

These factors might somehow "explain" the anomaly in the exploratory findings that longevity of program-plus-personnel co-occurs with higher scores. But rather than viewing the above points as "explanations," one is wiser to view the whole set of conditions mentioned here as indicative of insufficiencies in the findings to date. That is, *if* stability in program and personnel somehow does not "matter as much" where the "new" staff members are highly skilled and experienced, it may be that in fact the continuance of program and personnel at the other schools had little effect on their scores. Perhaps the presence at those schools of strong, experienced teachers with high standards and expectations was actually the factor at work. Alternatively, perhaps program-personnel stability matters more where teachers new to a school are less "strong" and/or experienced. Or again, maybe the persistence of the core curriculum and skilled coordinator are actually the "active ingredients" in program-staff stability: the longevity of classroom teachers may matter less. Other possibilities also suggest themselves as "explaining" the data presented here. The important thing to see is this: a fuller, more differentiated view of these last issues -- and, more generally, of the relationships that exist among each of the findings reported in this section -- is necessary and should be undertaken.

In the meantime, however, there is sufficient reason to speculate that the duration of program and staff together may have some bearing on students' reading-test performance.

As I began to report these findings, I noted that the exploratory study had located four conditions which (a) were based on reasonably good evidence, seemed to be present in all four of the schools studied, and which (b) appeared to be, in a very direct way, functionally relevant to the teaching and learning of reading in classrooms. I have now described and documented those four. In addition, I have tried to show *how* each of the four might bear upon the teaching and learning of reading. To review, the four conditions were:

(1) Close attention to a continuim of reading skills with a marked emphasis on reading for comprehension.

(2) Specialization of instruction in reading.

(3) The presence of strong, experienced teachers with high expectations and standards for student performance.

(4) Stability of central program features and key staff members over time.

In introducing the findings I also mentioned that three other conditions seemed to be present at the four schools, although the evidence for their prevalence in each school was somewhat less solid than the evidence of the presence of numbers one through four above. These conditions, too, seemed functionally related to the teaching and learning of reading, but less immediately so than the latter. These three conditions are discussed in the next section.

5. Other Possible Factors: Emphasis on Writing, Teacher Participation in Decision Making, Esprit de Corps

Three conditions in addition to those already discussed seemed to be present in the four schools visited. Each of these could have played a role in the schools' higher reading scores. An emphasis on writing may have extended students' experience with written language in ways that influenced their reading performance. Teacher participation in decision making about the content and organization of reading instruction may have contributed to teachers' feeling of program "ownership." That, in turn, may have stimulated their instructional efforts and effectiveness. A sense of esprit de corps among staff members may have had a similar effect.

The duration of fieldwork in most research projects is limited by practical constraints. And inevitably, when fieldwork ends, some issues remain less fully explored than others. Such was the case in this study with the issues discussed below. I subordinated investigation of them to concentrate on the four conditions described in the pages preceding. In my judgment, the latter seemed more directly related to teaching and learning in reading than those stated below. Still, as I will try to show, all three of the following deserve further investigation as the study of Title I reading instruction continues.

An emphasis on writing. Writing was most clearly emphasized in the curricula at Elysian Heights and Dorris Place. There were also indications that writing was a main concern at Alta Loma and 42nd Street.

At Elysian Heights, the centrality of writing was apparent in many ways. Letter writing, for instance, was omnipresent. Students in the upper grades answered "hundreds of letters a year" addressed to a cat named Room 8, a homeless feline who adopted the school in 1952. (Even though he had died in 1968, letters and presents continued to arrive at Elysian Heights for Room 8 each year.) A teacher of fifth and sixth graders included a letters-to-the-editor (of the L.A. Times' Student Outlook) program in his classroom curriculum. And as I entered yet another teacher's room with the principal one day after school, the teacher displayed a stack of sealed envelopes. "Well, we've been writing a lot of letters," he said. "Not all the kids have decided who they're going to send them to yet, though." Numerous field trips, special assemblies, and other special activities provided additional opportunities for letter writing by classes throughout the school.

During the period of the study, students at Elysian Heights were heartily encouraged to participate in an American Legion essay contest and a schoolwide patriotic essay contest sponsored by a former Elysian Heights teacher. (Winners of the latter at the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades received fifteen dollars worth of books.) There had been avid participation, too, in the Young Authors' Conference writing contest, for which children had written and illustrated their own original stories and bound them into books. An Elysian Heights student had been a contest winner, and his picture appeared on the front page of the local newspaper. Three Elysian Heights teachers volunteered their time to lead workshops for students in the Young Authors' Conference itself, held on a Saturday in early May.

Elysian Heights' commitment to writing and related language arts skills was also apparent in its program to give each third through sixth grader a dictionary. (Dictionary homework was required one night a week.) And one teacher, speaking of a colleague who taught sixth graders, commented: "He made them (students) write essays; he made them write letters; he made them write books. We all do a lot of writing."

Dorris Place Elementary School also placed a great deal of emphasis on writing. According to various staff members, "nine or ten teachers" (and their classes) participated in the Young Authors' Conference. A combined second-and-third-grade class had won a prize for the "best class book."

Another class had also produced a successful entry. Each teacher with whom I spoke mentioned placing an "emphasis" on English or language arts. One described various techniques he used to encourage his students to write letters. A number of staff members explicitly stated that they worked to integrate reading with writing and related language arts skills. And a section of Dorris Place's most recent Title I/School Improvement plan called for "making and sharing child-authored stories and books" as a reading activity for children in grades K through 3.

As the principal at Elysian Heights did, both a coordinator at Alta Loma and the principal at 42nd Street pointed out that the many, many field trips their classes took served as catalysts for both reading and writing. Students were often asked to write about what they saw or liked best on a trip. Writing thank-you letters to field-trip hosts was another frequent assignment. Book reports were also a recurrent activity in several 42nd Street classrooms. Sixth-graders at Alta Loma were required to do several research reports over the course of the year. Bulletin boards and display cases in both Alta Loma and 42nd Street featured students' writing. And teachers in both schools described assignments that they gave in order (as one teacher put it) "to get the kids writing; that's important, too."

To judge that these four schools "emphasized" writing was to make a comparison. That is, it was my impression the teachers in the four spent more, and more substantive, time on writing (and related skills than those in many similar schools that I had seen.* But for reasons noted earlier, I did little during my inquiry to pursue the topic of writing. Nearly all the data I had on the subject came from staff members' volunteered remarks in impromptu conversations and from casual observation of student papers, asignment sheets, etc.

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*In my experience, many elementary teachers devote much more of their language arts time to instruction in spelling, vocabulary and rudimentary grammar and much less to composition (especially to the composition of units of language longer than the sentence). Furthermore, teachers in the four schools studied seemed to spend more time on language arts lessons in general than those in many others I have visited.

In any case, it seemed on the basis of this evidence that a good bit of instructional attention was paid to writing in the four schools. And if this were so, it may well have been a factor influential in students' reading performance. Assignments to write and re-write letters, stories, and reports meant that students were spending substantial language-arts time attending to written text: constructing it, reading it over, perhaps expanding their vocabularies as well. It would seem that this in itself provided practice in a variety of reading-relevant skills. Furthermore, writing often followed and was based upon a reading assignment (e.g., writing letters to a newspaper editor, responding to a letter received, writing to a travel office for more information, doing a Black history report). The demands of such writing tasks, then, required that students pay close attention to and give thought to their reading. In addition, rewards for contest winners, the display of student papers and teachers' enthusiasm for an encouragement of writing all seemed to generate in each school* an environment in which language and its construction and comprehension were clearly valued.

Played out in these ways, the schools' emphasis on writing may well have had an influence on their students' reading test performance.

Teacher participation in program decisions. Teachers in each of the four schools seemed to have a significant role in making decisions about their reading programs.

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*Especially at Elysian Heights and Dorris Place.

At 42nd Street, the reading resource teacher suggested that teachers' views were considered in the selection of the Ginn 720 reading curriculum. To organize reading instruction according to the teaming or leveling system (in 1978-79 and 1979-80) had been their choice.*

At Elysian Heights, I was present at a faculty meeting during which the faculty discussed and voted on whether to follow the rotation (teaming) system or homeroom reading in 1981-82. Their decisions were honored. There were also indications that teachers had a say in what reading-curriculum materials would be used at the school. The coordinator of the program, the reading resource teacher reported:

> I feel and many teachers feel (the Houghton Mifflin Program) is very difficult for students.** I think we'll change (to another curriculum package) but I don't know which we'll switch to...
>
> Some teachers are finding the volcabulary tough and the concepts rather complicated for their children.

This seemed to indicate that teachers' views on the program were taken into account. And two teachers spoke on different occasions about "when we decided to go with" the Houghton-Mifflin materials.

Teachers at Dorris Place had joined in the decision to adopt the LAUSD Developmental Reading Program (DRP) as the school's preferred reading program.*** They had also agreed to try and then had made the decision grade-by-grade to abandon the teaming or leveling system for organizing reading instruction. (For a period of time teachers at some grades were using teaming while others were not, indicating a great deal of teacher autonomy.) As described earlier, classroom instructors at Dorris Place also had considerable freedom of choice in deciding what readers and other materials to employ. The Reading/Title I coordinator explained,

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*Recall that their preference for this arrangement was over-ruled by the principal only in the 1980-81 school year.

**The two teachers of sixth-grade students, however, called the Houghton-Mifflin "a good series" and elaborated with comments on some of the features they considered to be strengths.

***Under the School Preferred Reading Program, schools specified their preference for a core reading program and received additional District funds to purchase that program's materials. The School Preferred Reading Program went out of existence in 1979.

> At this school, we've always felt that people with kids in the classroom is what makes the difference... Teachers are left alone to teach...

Recounting the school's history, the new principal at Alta Loma explained:

> Through the early seventies, there were a series of principals here... the teachers here have gone out on their own, created their own programs. They work closely with one another. In fact (he added, (laughing) when I came I had to find a place to fit in (with their efforts).

As I have already reported, Alta Loma teachers at various grade levels had themselves worked out their different systems for organizing reading instruction. The bilingual coordinator had found a similar autonomy in in her role: "I liked being told, 'There's the program; you develop it.' On the other hand, to use the DRP schoolwide had been the decision of the former principal.

Across the four study schools, then, members of the instructional staff participated in substantive ways in program decision making. The reading programs at their schools were in a very real sense their programs. The teachers were commited to them; they spoke of them as good programs.* And that they were commited to them and valued them may have been a factor in the assiduousness of their teaching efforts.*

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*The exception in 1980-81, of course was 42nd Street. As I described above, teachers there seemed committed to the value of the teaming system they had been using in the past years when the school's reading scores rose.

Esprit de Corps. Faculty members and administrators in all four schools volunteered comments on the "rapport" or "esprit de corps" that existed among their professional staff. The bilingual coordinator at Alta Loma, for example, echoed the remarks of many of her colleagues when she said:

> There's a good rapport, a good climate in this school. In any working situation, you always have some cliques, but that's less so here.

Rapport among staff members at Alta Loma was quite evident in their everyday exchanges, and it was clearly accompanied by a great deal of mutual respect. In interviews, teachers consistently complimented others' concern for children, hard work, and teaching skill. As the School Improvement coordinator put it:

> The people here are dedicated, interested, concerned people. They go the extra mile for children.

Independently, two primary-grade teachers with whom I spoke offered the information that "the coordinators are really a big help." Sixth-grade teachers participating in the departmentalized arrangement routinely spoke of their common views and close working relationship.

"The staff seems to like to work here," said the reading resource teacher. Others agreed. As evidence they reported what had happened four years earlier when the mandate for faculty integration came. Those who had to leave Alta Loma at that time were very reluctant to do so. Many teachers who had managed to gain the positions at Alta Loma had stayed on at the school. This same story was told on four different occasions by different members of the staff, and it was told with apparent pride.

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*The extent of teachers' efforts in reading instruction is discussed above under finding number one, "Skills Plus and Emphasis on Comprehension" and under finding number three, "Experienced Teachers with High Standards and Expectations."

"Good rapport among our staff" was one of the things the Dorris Place principal mentioned in offering an overview of conditions at this school. The sixth-grade teacher with twenty-eight years' experience there also spoke of the "pleasant atmoshpere." And the teacher of a combined fifth-grade and sixth-grade class at Dorris Place remarked:

> Another reason maybe we do well here is the faculty: we all like each other. Of course I've spent all my ten years here, but I have friends in other schools and they say the faculty is cliquish. We aren't.

Once again, this seemed evident in the ways faculty members and administrators spoke to and acted with one another. And it was also apparent in staff members' mutually complimentary appraisals. "We have damn good teaching here," one teacher said. Another, comparing his years at Dorris Place with those at another Title I school, noted, "there were too many poor teachers there." The quality of the staff at Dorris Place, he felt, was very high. As noted earlier, teachers also routinely praised the work of their aides as well as that of their colleagues.

Similar attitudes characterized the remarks of administrators and classroom teachers at Elysian Heights, as I have already reported*. There, too, I witnessed the "rapport" staff members mentioned as I observed teachers and administrators visiting with one another and working together after school. And an air of enthusiasm about the entire school's program was also evident in the constant encouragement I received to visit classes and see programs. "Be sure to come on Friday and see the special Friday rotation," several teachers urged. Said another: "Don't forget to visit Ms _______'s class. She's really great." Another asked: "have you seen the labs yet? You shouldn't miss what they do in there." Numerous others on the Elysian Heights staff had similar advice and recommendations.

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*See quotations in the section entitled "Experienced Teachers with High Standards and Expectations."

Of course, what I have described here I heard and witnessed in the Spring of 1980-81. But given the continuance of staff and programs at the latter three schools, it seemed reasonable to guess that the same *esprit de corps* had probably existed in the years immediately past (i.e., those through which test scores had risen or remained relatively high). But the same inference was not warranted at 42nd Street, where conditions had changed substantially between 1979-80 and 1980-81.* To estimate the quality of staff relationships in the past there, I had to rely solely on retrospective reports. I have quoted many of those reports in earlier sections. It suffices to say here simply that reports suggested that there had been a rapport and a respect among staff members of 42nd Street, just as there seemed to have been at the other schools.**

Overall, then, staff members at the four schools studies seemed to get along well together and to respect one another as highly competent educators. That a core of each school's faculty had served together for some time probably both reflected and contributed to this state of affairs.

Staff *esprit de corps* may have affected the teaching-learning of reading at these schools. In general, it might have functioned to allow or encourage teachers' and administrators' investment of time and energy in the school program. The positive interpersonal environment may have facilitated staff members' spending more time on site, as well as a higher level of staff cooperation and collaboration, than might otherwise have been the case. They may also have been more inclined to pool ideas and to initiate activities that required collective efforts. Programs may have been more precisely articulated and smoother-running, too. Less energy may have been expended in fruitless disagreement. In short, staff esprit de corps may have contributed to many of the other conditions (cited earlier in this report) that the four schools had in common and which seemed to be functionally relevant to students' higher reading scores.

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*Recall that the changes included relatively high staff turnover, the end of participation in a desegregation busing arrangement, and replacement of the teaming or leveling system for organizing reading instruction by the self-contained classroom arrangement.

**This is not to intimate that positive interpersonal attitudes were absent at 42nd Street in 1980-81. In fact, there appeared to be generally good relations among the staff in that year. But personnel at 42nd Street spoke less about interpersonal attitudes in the present than about interpersonal attitudes in the past - probably because they considered the latter more relevant to my inquiry.

In summary, the exploratory inquiry identified three conditions that may have operated indirectly upon the teaching and learning of reading in the four schools studied. These were an emphasis on writing, teacher participation in program decision making, and an esprit de corps among staff members. Together with the four conditions discussed earlier - which the schools also had in common and which seemed to bear quite directly on teaching-learning in reading - these three deserve attention as the study of reading in Los Angeles Title I elementary schools continues.

Some directions for the continuation of the study are outlined in the last section of this report, together with some concluding remarks about the findings presented here.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND SOME ISSUES FOR CONTINUED RESEARCH

Prior to this writing, the findings elaborated through the preceding pages were presented orally and informally to several groups and individuals.* Each time, the presentation generated a number of questions that raised important issues. These issues deserve attention here. Thus, to round out and conclude the discussion of the exploratory study, I have listed a number of questions that I have been asked about its results and offered responses. The questions are listed in no particular order.

1. Aside from their presence in common in four high-scoring schools, is there reason to assume the seven conditions discussed here may account for schools' higher reading scores? After all, these same conditions may be present in schools with lower scores.

Clearly research must be continued in a larger set of schools - a set which includes schools which seem to be both more and less successful in helping students learn to read. (Sixth-grade medians on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills and other test scores will probably be used in electing this set, but only together with other indicators.) In the meantime, the findings presented here should be treated only as initial hypotheses.

The claim that the seven conditions discussed above may bear upon school's higher scores, however, is based upon more than their co-presence in the four schools studied. That claim is also based upon the apparent functional relevance of each condition to teaching and learning in reading. That is, it seems that a direct line can be traced from the presence of each condition to the everyday actions of teachers and students - actions which, given what is known about human learning, are likely to make a difference in student's achievement. I have tried to point out these links in describing each of the conditions. I suggested, for instance, that "emphasis" on reading-for-understanding was manifested in a variety of actions: use of subject matter texts for reading, routine assignments in basal readers, students' reading in diverse materials outside formal reading lessons, teachers' questions to students about what they read, and so on. Furthermore, I indicated that in many classrooms, "strong" experienced teachers evidently held students accountable for doing assigned work. Taken together, these findings suggest that students' gained considerable experience, or practice, in reading-for-comprehension -- which theory and research argue should help to assure effective learning. I offered similar arguments regarding the functional links of the other six conditions to teaching and learning.

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*Tentative findings were discussed with members of the LAUSD Research and Evaluation Branch in two staff development sessions in June, 1981. Another informal presentation was made to the Branch's Title I unit and members of the Title I Unit's new Research and Evaluation Planning Team in September of 1981, as this report was being completed. I have also discussed the results of the exploratory study informally with the colleagues at UCLA in the Center for the Study of Evaluation.

At this point in the research, many of these links remain to be documented with firmer phenomenological evidence. For instance, one might want to measure just how much time students in these, or schools that seem similarly effective, actually spend per unit of time in reading-for-understanding and then go on to compare that to a similar measure taken in schools that do not "emphasize" comprehension. Or again, one might want somehow to count instances of instructionally related collaboration among staff members and see if these exceed the number in schools which seem to lack the esprit de corps of the four faculties studied to date. In short, continued research needs to do more than compare more and less "successful" schools. It also must confirm that the links which seem to exist between conditions and actions that "make a difference" are, in fact, present. Now, however, such links do seem to exist; and that provides a second basis for hypothesizing that the conditions cited above may very well bear upon schools' higher scores.

Finally, there was some preliminary evidence to suggest that the conditions present in the four schools studied are not universally present in Los Angeles Title I elementary schools. This evidence lay in the experienced-based comparisons made by staff members. Teachers, for instance, asserted that some past faculty members in their schools had not required students to work hard, had not held students accountable for completing work, and had believed that "poor kids, or "inner city students" have so many problems at home that they cannot perform well in school. Staff members also named other schools in which faculty members didn't "control" students, didn't work closely together (were "cliquish"), spent too much time teaching discrete skills, "never" required students "to write more than a sentence", and so on.

It is possible, of course, that these views were merely myths in the culture of urban teachers -- myths based upon a few observed cases and more hearsay, which allowed staff members to ratify the value of their own practices and opinions. But the concreteness and specificity of their remarks suggested that the speakers were recounting actual experiences, and that the conditions present in their schools were, in fact, absent in some others. Again, the latter remains to be substantiated by further research. But for now, the experienced-based comparisons articulated by many staff members interviewed provide a third basis for entertaining the findings presented above as hypotheses.

2. Does it seem that all of the seven conditions discussed here need to be present in a school -- or do some seem to matter more in students' reading performance than others?

Any claim that some of the conditions cited seem to matter more (or to have a stronger influence) than others in students' reading achievement would be a guess based on intuition, logic, or theory. There is no way to know for sure at this point in the research whether any of the seven conditions in fact differentiate more effective from less effective reading programs, let alone which condition or conditions may be more critical. It is, however, important to keep in mind that *systemic relatonships* may exist among some or all of the conditions discussed.

Traditional educational research models encourage thinking about the effects of variables in additive terms. One variable "explains" a certain amount of the variance; add a second to the equation and a bit more is explained. Or, a given variable seems to make no statistically significant difference in outcomes; but in the presence of a second variable, it is found to make such a difference. Such findings beg the question of whether one variable (condition) can exist in a social setting without another or set of others. In addition, they do not reveal *how* the variables introduced function with respect to one another.

The point here is that the co-presence of all or some subset of the seven conditions discussed above as findings may not be fortuitous. Certain of these conditions may *mutually generate and sustain* one another. Thus, for instance, *esprit de corps,* staff and program stability, specialized reading instruction, staff participation in program decision making, and the presence of "strong," experienced teachers with high standards and expectations - all may act in system to be mutually perpetuating. And as elements in a system, they may function interdependently to influence the quality of teaching and learning in reading. Independently, they may not be "transportable" to or efficacious in other schools. One may not be able to exist in a school or act on reading achievement without the others (or, perhaps, some of the others).

Thus, the question, "Which condition(s) matter(s) most?", is only one way of construing an issue for further research. It is important to ask first: "If all or some of these conditions do seem to account for higher reading achievement, how do they function in relation to one another?"

3. *The exploratory study inquired only superficially into the nature of the students and communities that the four schools served. These schools are not located in the most socially and economically oppressed areas of Los Angeles. Couldn't that make a difference in their reading scores?*

There are several ways to respond to this question. One is to point out that the large-scale studies showing correlations between socioeconomic status and achievement: (1) show only correlations, not cause and effect, (2) minimize the significance of the "outliers"* -- schools which do not fit the general pattern, and (3) have rarely looked at what is going on inside schools. As a result, these studies (which probably underlie the question stated above) do not address the question, "Can particular school faculties and their programs provide environments in which children who live in poverty can learn effectively?" The findings of these studies imply that most schools most often do not; they do not show that schools *cannot.*

This response to the question stated above merely serves to put the issue it raises in perspective: it has not in any sense been proven that poverty (or the social conditions which often seem to accompany it) accounts for lower academic achievement. Indeed, despite considerable research attention, the relationships between poverty, schooling, and achievement have yet to be effectively explored.

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*Literally, those that do not fall on or near the line graphing the direct correlational relationship between socioeconomic status of schools' enrollment and test-score performance.

A second response is more to the point. Sixth-grade students in the four schools studied managed to attain generally higher reading test scores than students in schools with adjacent or much higher poverty rankings. Furthermore, in two of the schools, sixth-grade medians rose while poverty rankings declined. If Title I poverty rankings is a reasonably valid indicator of the relative socioeconomic status of Los Angeles schools' enrollments, and if CTBS scores are at least roughly valid indicators of students' reading achievement, then the latter evidence seems to suggest that socioeconomc factors had little to do with the four schools' sixth-grade medians.

But a third response is also due the question which began this discussion. As the research continues, it should give attention to the social contexts of the schools studied. This attention could take three forms.

First, more should be understood about the statistical indicators used by the District to describe such features of schools' enrollment as poverty, transience, and stability. Some schools' Title I poverty rankings, for instance, change twenty, thirty or even more points from one year to the next. Even with considerable movement of families into and out of certain school attendance boundaries, it is difficult to understand such dramatic changes in a community's relative "poverty" within a year. It would be useful, too, to know whether the percent of student transiency is based upon the addition of departing students and entering students or calculated in some other way.

Second, it would be useful - within the constraints posed by a concern for privacy - to inquire about the learning-related activities of students in their lives outside school. (Ruling out a simple correlation between socioeconomic status and achievement does not rule out differences in home conditions that may influence students' learning. One cannot assume that income level inevitably determines attitudes and behavior in the home.) Thus, students might be asked how much time they spend in free reading or on schoolwork during their hours away from school. The circulation records of school libraries, bookmobiles, and local public libraries could be examined.

Finally, other, more general indicators might yield useful contextual data on the nature of social life in the communities that schools serve. Records of parent participation in school and other community affairs, of voter registration, of newspaper circulation and the like suggest themselves as sources of relevant background information.

4. Suppose that further research confirms the hunches generated by the exploratory study. Suppose that some or all of the conditions discussed above do appear to be routinely present in "more successful" schools and consistently absent in "less successful" ones. Can these conditions be practically achieved in other schools? Are they "transportable"?

The answer to this question is "it depends." It depends, first of all, upon how the conditions are found to be influential in relation to one another. Secondly, it depends upon the dissemination strategies employed. Finally, it depends upon one's definition of the terms "practically" and "transportable."

Independently, schools can probably re-orient their instructional activities such that students spend more time on reading-for-understanding and writing, especially with on-going support and encouragement. The district can, perhaps, adopt policies which tend to support staff and program longevity in schools. With some guidance, experience, and feedback, faculties can probably become adept in implementing teaming, or leveling or departmentalization. At least formally, teachers can be involved in program decision making. "Strong," experienced teachers with high standards and expectations, one imagines, are not easily produced. But policies might be adopted which encourage such teachers to leave schools where there seem to be a "critical mass" of similar teachers and to take positions in others. Their presence in these other schools - as informal persuaders and models - might work to change colleague's beliefs and practices. High staff morale or esprit de corps might follow from one or more of the measures mentioned so far.

These suggestions already imply some approaches to change which are unusual and may be deemed "impractical." And, in any case, my own experience suggests that effectively "implementing" the activities mentioned (e.g., more reading-for-comprehension, teaming, more time on more substantive writing assignments) would require more than a mandate and one or two quick in-service sessions. While it is only a personal opinion, my perspective is that most of the beliefs and practices described in this report are not "transportable" -- not if one considers them as so many machine parts to be moved into a factory in replacement of others. To be created where it is presently absent, each of the conditions discussed above would require behavioral and, in some instances, attitudinal change. Such change does not occur quickly, but it can be nurtured and developed "clinically," i.e., through on-going educative experiences and feedback from others (peers, supervisors, consultants) deemed credible.

This perspective on change is based upon a view of schools as social systems constituted by the thought and actions of their members. Activities within schools -- as in other social systems -- are grounded in a body of interrelated perceptions, beliefs, and ways of routinely interpreting experience that are more-or-less shared by at least a substantial core of the staff members. These perceptions, beliefs, and routine interpretations sustain members' activities. And, in a continuous, reflexive process, members' activities recurrently provide evidence which allows them to sustain their perceptions, beliefs, and ways of interpreting what they experience. Thus, in most cases, faculties (or their key members) have "good reasons" for doing what they are doing and for not doing something else. They often claim that those who suggest changes in practice "do not understand the situation here" or "don't realize the problems we're facing." In such circumstances as these, change most often evolves. It is rarely accomplished quickly. Even when a change in practice is mandated, it may exist only in form (not in substance) until members of the social system internalize or adopt its underlying assumptions as their own. If this perspective on change has any validity (and the history of many educational innovations and other social changes suggest that it does), it should serve as a caveat against against expecting a "quick fix." If one assumes further research warranted the attempt, the conditions reported here could probably be developed in other Title I schools in Los Angeles. But their development -- particulary for some conditions in some schools -- is likely to require time, commitment, and creative approaches. And all three will be required in larger measure to the extent that the conditions found to be influential operate systemically, rather than independently.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE RESEARCH METHODS

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE RESEARCH METHODS

The discussion here is neither highly technical nor highly detailed.* Its purpose is simply to provide interested readers with more context for making sense of the preceding research results. Toward that end, I explain more fully then I did in the text how I went exploring, what precisely I searched for, where I chose to look and why, and how much work was done during the study.

How: Fieldwork From an Ethnographic Perspective

The findings of this study evolved in field graphic perspective.** Traditionally ethnographic concepts and methods have been used by anthropologists to study the cultures of groups in "exotic" locales. (The work of Margaret Mead in Samoa and Bali may come to mind.) But ethnography can be used as well to learn and write about the doings of social groups in places such as schools.

How is ethnographic field work done? Usually, the ethnographer begins with broad, general questions rather like numbers (1) and (2) with which this study began. Then his/her work proceeds from onsite data gathering, to data analysis, to identification of more precise questions, back to data gathering again, and so on in a cycle repeated for the duration of the study. (See Figure 1.)

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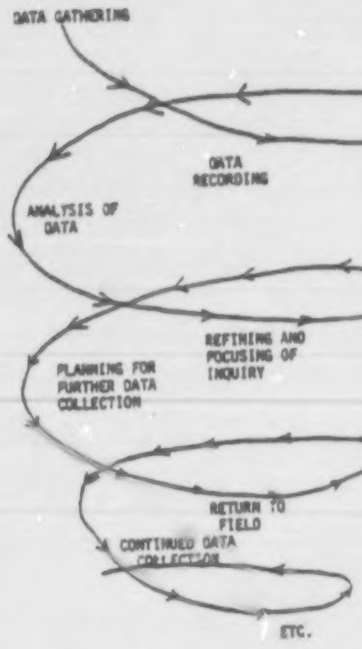
*For a more comprehensive treatment of the methodology and research procedures underlying this study, see An Introduction to Practical Fieldwork from an Ethnographic Perspective (CSE, 1981). Prepared by this author, that booklet accompanied two consecutive staff development sessions held for members of the LAUSD Research and Evaluation Branch in June, 1981.

**Ethnographic derives from ethnography, which literally means "writing about the nations": -graphy from the Greek verb "to write," ethno- from the Greek noun "ethnos," usually translated as "nation", "tribe," or "people."

FIGURE I
The Cycle of Ethnographic Fieldwork


DATA GATHERING
DATA RECORDING
ANALYSIS OF DATA
REFINING AND FOCUSING OF INQUIRY
PLANNING FOR FURTHER DATA COLLECTION
RETURN TO FIELD
CONTINUED DATA COLLECTION
ETC.

Nearly everything an ethnographer notices on site can be data. He/she attends primarily to what participants in a setting say and do in their everyday lives and to when and how they say and do it. Planned interviews and impromptu conversations with participants are also important information sources. Often, too, documents are examined.

Precise experiences are recorded as they occur (or as soon thereafter as possible) in field notes. The ethnographer also sets down his/her own impressions and reactions, making sure to separate them from descriptions of what occurred. At the end of a day on site, the notes are reviewed and filled in. Then, they are examined to identify emerging themes and patterns: ideas, actions, and action sequences, opinions and beliefs, etc., that recur in the data and seem to fit together. The researcher also looks for apparent contradictions or discrepancies in the patterns, pinpoints where information seems incomplete, and tries to monitor how his/her biases may be influencing the accumulating record and evolving interpretation.

As the ethnographer reflects on his/her field notes in these ways, hunches and further questions suggest themselves. These serve to direct the continuing inquiry when the ethnographer returns to the field. And as, repeating these steps, the ethnographer collects further and more detailed information, he/she shapes the first, tentative hunches into educational guesses and then (time and circumstances permitting) the educated guesses into conclusions.

When an ethnographer does all this, his general goal is usually to make sense of what is going on and to see how things work in a social setting. He attempts to do so by locating patterns: functional relationships among the ways that participants see, think, and act in their world. And he attempts to do so "holistically": seeking patterns at and across many different levels, in many different levels, in many different areas, of participants' lives.

In the study reported here, I could not attend fully to the ethnographer's concerns for holism and for understanding the world as those in the settings studied understand it. I did, however, keep these concerns constantly in mind as I visited the schools. And while time was insufficient to push to the level of detail that ethnography seeks, I did follow the cycle of repeating the research steps outlined above. The exploratory study, then, was not truly ethnographic; but the fieldwork was ethnographically oriented.

What: Functionally Relevant Patterns

The foregoing discussion not only explains generally how I went about exploring; it also begins to indicate what, in particular, I was looking for. Given the study's purposes, I was of course searching for phenomena, conditions, and things that appeared to be fuctionally related to learning to read, or at least to taking a reading test. (These might include environmental circumstances, activities, organizational arrangements, beliefs or attitudes, materials, or any number of other things.) But more specifically, I was looking for such things in patterns-- patterns wherein they co-occurred regularly, routinely with higher reading scores.

At one level of analysis, I wanted to see a pattern of this kind evident within a school and/or its surrounding community.* That is, some set of functionally relevant things** would need to appear not just here and there and sometimes, but routinely and consistently across action settings (e.g., classrooms, staff discussions, etc. and/or across participants' reports to the research.*** (See Figure 2.)

Next, at a second level of analysis, I wanted to see (if possible) the same set of functionally relevant things patterned across the higher-

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*For information on what occurred in the community, I had to rely on common themes in the reports of school personnel. There was no time to spend in community study.

**By "functionally relevant things," I simply mean whatever manifestly related to teaching-learning or test-taking in reading in a school/community. (I kept research and practical experience on reading and on instruction generally in mind to help me decide what might be functionally relevant.)

***Except for matters I could not possibly observe--generally historical events and events in the community--I tried to rely exclusively on interview responses or any other single type of evidence. Rather, I worked to confirm the presence of apparently relevant phenomena, conditions, etc., across types by evidence in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

The Task Within Schools

Identify & Confirm Patterns of functionally relevant Phenomena	Across Settings & participants' Accounts
Across types of data	

FIGURE 3

The Task Across Schools

To identify patterns of functionally relevant phenomena across schools:

PHENOMENON	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
A	?	?	?	?
B	?	?	?	
C	?	?		
D	?			
.				
.				
etc.				

scoring schools studied. That is, they would need, ideally, to co-occur consistently with higher reading scores from school to school. (See figure 3.)

At the end of the exploration reported here, I then hoped to be able to identify some things (phenomena, conditions, etc.) that seemed to be

(1) functionally related to teaching-learning and/or test taking in reading.

(2) consistently co-present in Title I schools with higher reading scores.

Such things, my hunch would be, might very well account for schools' higher sixth-grade medians.

This reasoning and these criteria guided what I came to include as the study's findings. I have given primary attention to those things that most fully met these standards.

Note, however, that a third analysis has to be done before the findings reported here can be firmed up. That analysis will need to contrast conditions at higher-scoring schools with conditions of lower-scoring ones. It will need to document, that is, that those sets of things that are regularly co-present with higher scores are routinely absent where scores are lower. In order to accomplish this kind of contrastive analysis, research will continue in the fall of the 1981-82 school year in a set of schools with lower reading scores. (See Figure 4.) This step will lead to the clarification and revision--and thus the strengthening--of the findings to date.

Where: Higher-Scoring Schools of Two Types

This study might well have begun with visits to both higher- and lower-scoring schools. The difficulty with this was simply that time and resources restricted to about four the total number of sites that could be

FIGURE 4

A Contrastive Analysis of Functionally Relevant Patterns

PHENOMENON	HIGHER-SCORING SCHOOLS				LOWER-SCORING SCHOOLS			
A	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0
B	+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0
C	0	+	0	0	+	0	0	0
D	0	0	+	0	0	+	+	0
E	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
F	0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+
G	+	0	+	0	0	0	+	+
H	+	+	0	0	0	0	0	0
I	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	0

Here, the presence of A and B and the absence of F occur in each higher-scoring school. In contrast, A and B are absent in each lower-scoring school, while F is present. Attention must be given to the functional equilvalence of formally different phenomena. For instance, H and I in in this example may be different procedures that accomplish the same ends and should, therefore, figure in a hypothesis about what accounts for higher reading scores.

studied profitably. To choose four higher-scoring schools made more sense as an initial step than to divide attention between two kinds of schools (i.e., higher- and lower-scoring). It would afford a better opportunity to see whether, in fact, schools with higher sixth-grade medians seemed to have anything relevant in common. In order to choose schools, therefore, I began by examining profiles of the nine Title I elementary school with 1979-80 sixth grade CTBS medians above the 50th percentile.

The profiles included information from 1974-75 to 1979-80 on the schools' sixth-grade CTBS medians, Title I poverty ranks, students' ethnicity, total enrollment, and transiency/stability of enrollment.* This information showed that the nine schools fell into three general categories.

(1) Schools where both test scores and relative poverty indicators had jumped markedly upward from 1978-79 to 1979-80;**

(2) Schools where scores had remained relatively high (compared to other District Title I schools) for several years, while their relative poverty ranking remained stable;

(3) Schools where scores had climbed rather constantly year after year, while their poverty rankings declined.

Students' socioeconomic status, as I mentioned earlier, is frequently cited as an "explanation" for test performance. To help rule out this argument, I wanted to avoid schools in category (1), where the indicator of socioeconomic status (Title I poverty ranking) moved upward simultaneously with reading scores. Thus, I sought two schools each from categories (2) and (3). In choosing these, I was interested in schools with larger enrollments and with both largely Black and largely Hispanic student bodies.*

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*Examples of the school profiles I received are included in the next appendix of the report. They were made available with the assistance of David Houck and prepared by Jack Reynolds, both of the LAUSD Research and Evaluation Branch.

**Schools with *lower* poverty rankings serve communities that are relatively *less well-off,* as measured by the number of students receiving free lunches and the number of student families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

Using these criteria and drawing from the nine "over 50th percentile" Title I elementary schools, I was not quite able to complete the set of four. I was able to select two schools from category (2): consistently higher scores, stable poverty ranking. But I was satisfied that only one school with the latter pattern was found among the Title I elementary schools with 1979-80 median sixth-grade CTBS reading scores in the 40th and 50th percentile range.

Ultimately, then, I conducted this study in:

- Two Title I schools where sixth-grade CTBS reading scores had been above the 49th percentile for at least three consecutive years, while poverty rankings held relatively constant. Both had predominatly Hispanic enrollments and smaller proportions of Asian students.
- Two Title I schools where sixth-grade scores had risen (to the 56th and 42nd percentiles, respectively) while their poverty rankings declined. Both had predominatly Black student bodies; one had a notable minority of Hispanic students.

How Much: Sixty Hours of On-Site Research

A total of about 60 hours--the equivalent of roughly two school weeks--was spent on site in the four schools. These hours were spread from early May to mid-June, with time for analyzing field notes and focusing inquiry between phases of data collection. Rather than completing work in one school and then moving on to another, I moved back and forth among the four, collecting information until the school year was virtually over. As I worked in this way, themes and patterns emerging at one schol suggested what to check into at others.

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*Larger enrollments are more usual in Title I schools districtwide; Blacks and Hispanics constitute by far the largest cultural groups enrolled in these schools, and the language experience of the latter usually presents different educational challenges.

During the study, 40 interviews were conducted with 30 staff members, Usually, I spoke with principals and reading coordinators or resource teachers more than once. Other interviewees included classroom teachers and, here and there, a Title I or Bilingual Program coordinator and a librarian. Questions for what I have labeled "interviews" were planned in advance in light of information obtained earlier about the school and the individual staff member's role. But countless brief, impromptu conversations with teachers and others also occurred.

In addition, I visited and observed activities in twenty-four different classrooms. These observations were sometimes pre-scheduled; in other instances, I dropped in without a specific appointment. (In all cases, however, teachers and others in the school knew that I might be coming in to observe sometime.) Each observation lasted about fifteen or twenty minutes; nearly all were timed to coincide with classes' reading periods. Often, I had the chance afterwards to talk with the teachers about what I had seen.

Both interviews and observations were concentrated more heavily on teachers and classrooms in the schools' upper grades, especially grade 6. Some focusing of effort within the schools was necessary, given the time available for work. And, given rather high student transiency rates, sixth grade medians seemed likely to be more valid indicators of conditions and activities in sixth grade (and secondarily, perhaps, in the fifth and fourth grades) than of conditions and activities school wide.*

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*The test scores cited throughout this report are "matched scores." Schools' matched scores reflect the test performance of only those students who were enrolled in the school from one testing period (e.g., Spring of 1978-79) to the next (e.g., Spring 1979-80), and who took the test in English in both years. Thus, schools' matched scores exclude the test results of (a) students new to the school since the last CTBS testing, and (b) students at the school who have taken the CTBS in English for the first time.

Supplementing the information already described were data gathered constantly as I informally observed activities in hallways and on playgrounds, in school offices and staff lounges, in faculty meetings and reading labs at the four schools. Still other information came from official documents and other sources: schools' Title I/School Improvement plans, handbooks, curriculum materials, teachers' assignment sheets, notices to parents, student papers on bulletin boards, and so forth. Material from such sources found its way into my field notes along with that from interviews and classroom observations. None of this was done secretly. My notebook was always out, and I was always writing in plain view.

Everyone in the schools seemed to know the purpose of my visits. The Director of the LAUSD Research and Evaluation Branch, Dr. Floraline Stevens, had contacted each principal before I appeared. She explained that we wanted to understand what seemed to explain their schools' higher scores and urged them to assure cooperation with my work. My own explanations of the study followed along these same lines.

Reminding school personnel of their higher scores and describing them in advance as "successful" were absolutely necessary in order to secure their full cooperation with a study conducted at an extremely busy time in the school year. But portraying their efforts in these ways probably also influenced staff members' thinking--and so their action and reports during the study. Whatever changes may have occurred, however, remain ineffable. All interviewees seemed extremely frank and open. There was a great deal of diversity and self-criticism in their remarks, along with comon themes and acceptance of credit. And I sensed no effort, at any time in any school, to "put on a show" for the visitor (such as often happens during program review, accreditation, and other explicitly evaluative site visits).* In short, what I saw and heard seemed to me to be extremely straightforward versions of affairs in the four schools and their communities.

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*In any case: (1) my schedule was too erratic for any of the schools to have undertaken and sustained such a performance, (2) there was no real reason why they should do so, and (3) too much else was going on to make it worthwhile.

APPENDIX B

THE FOUR SCHOOLS: THUMBNAIL SKETCHES

THE FOUR SCHOOLS: THUMBNAIL SKETCHES

In this appendix, sketches of the four schools provide some selected background information on each and concise descriptions of each one's reading program. I tried to construct these sketches succinctly: (1) to outline some particular themes that stood out at individual sites, (2) to anticipate questions readers might have,* and (3) to explain conditions which influenced research at one or two of the schools. Given these goals, the same topics are not always covered from sketch to sketch. But each sketch does offer an outline of the school as an individual entity, and together they provide a reference point for discussion in the text.

The first two sketches describe schools that had consistently higher scores and relatively constant poverty rankings. Then, two "rising scores, declining poverty ranking" schools are discussed.

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*In this regard, the questions and reactions of LAUSD Research and Evaluation Branch staff members, to whom I delivered an oral, preliminary version of this report, were extremely helpful.

ELYSIAN HEIGHTS PROFILE
1974 - 1980

Administrative
Area 7

YEAR	GRADE 6 READING NATIONAL PERCENTILE (CTBS)	TITLE 1 POVERTY RANK	DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ETHNICITY					% ENROLLMENT	% TRANSIENCY	% STABILITY
			Amer. Indian Alaskan Native	Black, Not Hispanic	Asian Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White, Not Hispanic			
1981-82		134								
1980-81		141								
1979-80	60	153	1.5	2.4	18.6	65.4	12.2	468	24	[illegible]
1978-79	60	129	1.4	1.6	17.1	64.6	15.3	426	20	71
1977-78	64	140	1.9	1.1	18.6	61.6	16.8	463	28	73
1976-77	[illegible]	139	0.6	1.5	[illegible]	57.7	[illegible]	492	26	77
1975-76	74	139	0.4	2.0	18.7	56.5	22.4	492	26	75
1974-75	68	142	0.0	2.9	18.2	[illegible]	[illegible]	468	46	
1973-74	42	136	0.0	3.0	16.2	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	53	

General background. Elysian Heights Elementary School lies in a little valley just to the west of Elysian Park and Dodger Stadium. A Racially Isolated Minority School (RIMS), it was never involved in the District's mandatory busing program.

Elysian Heights' staff members routinely pointed with pride to the school's wide variety of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, programs, and field trips. During the course of the research, students were studying special curricula on life in Antarctica and health. Each Friday morning, students in grades 4 through 6 rotated through 45-minute periods for experiences in music, art appreciation, classical literature, science, physical fitness, and other topics which (drawing on the special interests and expertise of regular faculty members in the upper grades) supplemented the regular curriculum. The school maintained small animals in a pen adjacent to a vegetable and flower garden on the school grounds. The Animal Club and Garden Club were among twelve separate clubs and special classes that met after school during just one week in June. As this study progressed, sixth graders were winding up a year-long series of fund-raising activities to pay for the entire class's week-long stay at a San Bernardino Mountains camp. Field trips to Los Angeles County Art Museum, UCLA, Placentia Canyon, Catalina Island, Malibu Canyon, and Port Hueneme took place within a few weeks. This pace was typical, school calendars revealed.

The Principal (at Elysian Heights for twenty years) emphasized that, "All this activity pays dividends in the end: it makes the school an exciting place to go to.... and it serves as a reason for reading, talking, and writing." Independent comments by teachers indicated that nearly all shared this perspective.

Writing received heavy emphasis in the curriculum. Students answered "hundreds of letters a year" addressed to a cat named Room 8, the school's mascot. (Room 8 died in 1968 after fifteen years at Elysian Heights, and television stations around the country continue to broadcast a film of Room 8's story. And each time they do, letters pour in.) The emphasis on writing was also manifest in pen-pal, letter-to-the-editor, and other recurrent classroom letter-writing assignments, as well as in the school's high level of participation in a number of writing contests.

The quality of teaching, the regularity of rigorous homework assignments, and "high expectations" for student performance were themes repeated throughout faculty interviews. The principal noted that Elysian Heights students "go home loaded down with homework." Teachers and principal lauded the commitment, energy and skill of the fifth- and sixth-grade teachers. They, in turn, pointed to the "fine teachers and fine programs, especially in the lower grades; by the time they get here, they're well-prepared." Observation suggested an enthusiastic, hard-working faculty throughout the school.

The reading program. Instruction in reading was based upon Houghton Mifflin materials, in use for about four and half years at Elysian Heights.

Regular instruction took place in two "rotations": one at grades 5 and 6, the other in grades 3 and 4. Students in each pair of grades shifted among their respective teachers for reading, so that each teacher taught children at only three levels on the Houghton Mifflin continuum. Students in grades K-2 (with the exception of a few who joined the grade 3 and 4 rotation) were taught reading by their individual classroom teachers.

A reading lab staffed by a full-time reading specialist/reading coordinator and college students trained as tutors provided extra instruction for 125 or so students each week. Working with an adult-child ratio of 1:5, the lab staff employed the American Language Corporation (ALC) prescriptive-diagnostic system and a great wealth of audiovisual and print materials by diverse publishers.

DORRIS PLACE PROFILE

1974 - 1980

Administrative
Area 7

YEAR	GRADE 6 READING NATIONAL PERCENTILE (CTBS)	TITLE I POVERTY RANK	DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ETHNICITY					% ENROLLMENT	% TRANSIENCY	% STABILITY
			Amer. Indian Alaskan Native	Black, Not Hispanic	Asian Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White, Not Hispanic			
1981-82		196								
1980-81		197								
1979-80	56	175	0.0	0.9	31.1	64.4	3.5	537	15	84
1978-79	50	152	0.2	0.7	27.4	63.9	7.9	570	15	88
1977-78	52	145	0.0	0.7	26.7	65.8	6.8	573	16	83
1976-77	41	144	0.0	0.3	26.4	67.6	5.7	578	16	85
1975-76	31	144	0.0	0.7	21.5	67.6	10.2	578	13	88
1974-75	25	152	0.2	0.4	23.9	68.4	7.2	557	24	
1973-74	Not in Title I	157	0.0	0.0	24.9	65.7	9.4	566	29	

General background. Dorris Place serves a community clearly demarcated by the intersection of the Los Angeles River with Interstate 5 (just west of the Pasadena Freeway) and Rich Street. Several staff members referred to the neighborhood, which lies just north of Elysian Park, as "self-contained": its freeway and river borders function literally as barriers.

While a third of the school's teaching positions changed hands in the past year, the principal noted that "the movement was natural" and among younger staff. The changes resulted not from teachers' desire for re-assignment with the District, but rather from maternity leaves, decisions of spouses to take jobs in other cities, and the like. Indeed, the "good rapport" and "mutual respect" that existed among faculty members were repeatedly mentioned in interviews. That these feelings were authentic seemed evident in the staff's interaction.

Even after the recent faculty departures, a group of highly experienced teachers remained, especially in the upper grades. Two at the sixth-grade level, for instance, had been at Dorris Place for 28 and 10 years, respectively. The third, with 21 years' experience in Los Angeles schools, had served at Dorris Place for the past six. And the Title I coordinator/reading coordinator was in her tenth year at the school. Although colleagues saw their individual teaching styles as quite different, the experience, skills, and hard work of these and other teachers were often cited as the foundation of the school's effectiveness. As one put it: "It's just the unabashed adequacy of the teaching of those things that we know will make for our pupil's success that makes the difference."

During the 1980-81 school year, Dorris Place was in its final year as a Title I "continuing service" school.* Title I funds, it seemed then, would not be available for 1981-82: the school's relative poverty ranking no longer qualified compensatory education assistance. The professional staff awaited the loss of Title I funding with serious concern. Teachers individually and rountinely reported that their Title I aides were "very good," "excellent"--and an important element in the "success" of the school's reading program. (Observation suggested the aides did play a key role in the supervision of reading instruction.) Some staff members also expected that the Developmental Reading Program would be too "cumbersome" to manage without the full-time reading coordinator and her experienced, knowledgeable, retrieval room clerk.*

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*Even after it becomes clear that a school no longer qualifies for Title I funds, the funds continue for two years. Presumably, this allows the school time to plan for operations on a lower budget. However, after the 1980-81 school year ended, it became clear that Dorris Place would receive Title I funds in 1981-82.

The reading program. At the core of reading instruction were the LAUSD's Developmental Program (DRP) materials in Spanish and English. Reading was managed schoolwide using the continuum of skills specified in this program and matched to the LAUSD reading continuum. From clasroom to classroom the DRP system was accompanied by a variety of other texts and reading matter. The reading coordinator reported that she and the principal encouraged teachers to use subject-area (e.g., social studies and science) texts in teaching reading comprehension. Observation found that at least some teachers followed this advice.

Exactly when the DRP was introduced no one could say, but most placed the date between six and eight years ago.

Each teacher worked exclusively with his/her own students in reading with the assistance of an aide. As the Title I coordinator/reading coordinator explained: "When we began DRP we used a cooperative teaching or teaming approach....(but) at this school, we've always felt that people with kids in the classroom is the basis of success."

Extensive supplementary materials - most part of the DRP - were available in the reading resource, or retrieval, room.

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*Had I known in advance that Dorris Place seemed about to lose its Title I status and funds, I would probably have selected another school to visit. (Once I had learned this, however, circumstances made its replacement impossible.) In any case, the school did achieve higher sixth-grade reading medians during a time when its poverty ranking was markedly lower. And the relative ranking itself may not be a valid indicator of community socio-economic status in this case. Three different faculty members who seemd familiar with the neighborhood argued that the standard of living therein had changed little. What had happened, they maintained, was that the Asian families (who constituted an increasing proportion of the community) included many who were reluctant to accept the assistance which "counted" in calculating student poverty--free lunch and AFDC. Thus, they maintained, the community seemed to be better off when in fact it was not.

ALTA LOMA PROFILE

1974 - 1980

Administrative
Area 5

YEAR	GRADE 6 READING NATIONAL PERCENTILE (CTBS)	TITLE I POVERTY RANK	DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ETHNICITY					% ENROLLMENT	% TRANSIENCY	% STABILITY
			Amer. Indian Alaskan Native	Black, Not Hispanic	Asian Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White, Not Hispanic			
1981-82		28								
1980-81		21								
1979-80	56	35	0.0	73.8	1.9	23.9	0.4	694	37	68
1978-79	48	89	0.1	79.3	2.2	18.2	0.1	682	41	58
1977-78	45	111	0.0	84.9	2.3	12.4	0.4	769	30	75
1976-77	32	102	0.0	87.3	1.6	9.4	1.7	837	33	72
1975-76	28	102	0.0	90.5	1.7	7.1	0.7	842	32	74
1974-75	25	105	0.1	90.9	1.5	6.5	0.9	856	64	
1973-74	21	106	0.0	90.9	1.5	7.4	0.2	933	69	

General background. Alta Loma is located just off Washington Boulevard between Crenshaw and La Brea. It is classified as a Racially Isolated Minority School (RIMS). But in 1978-79 and 1979-80, half of Alta Loma's fifth and sixth graders (about 100 children) were bused to a "mid-site" school in Van Nuys as part of the LAUSD desegregation program.

Staff members emphasized that faculty turnover had been low, particularly in the upper grades. A core of teachers, including several program coordinators, had been at the school for about ten years; a few, longer. When four years ago the faculty (then over 50% minority) was required to be integrated, numbers of White teachers, volunteered to join the Alta Loma staff. Those who came, stayed on. (One with experience in schools across Los Angeles touted her Alta Loma teaching position as "a plum.")

The school's current, highly experienced principal arrived in February, 1981, replacing one who had served for five years at Alta Loma until her retirement. Having experienced a succession of principals through the early 1970's who stayed but briefly, some long-term faculty members cited the former principal's five-year tenure as a source of stability in the school.

Teachers consistently agreed with the vice-principal/Title I coordinator that "we have a fairly good student body; it's not a rough school." As the principal put it: "The kids are, you might say, still innocent enough that we can entice them to get involved in learning." A number of teachers volunteered that student behavior seemed to have improved over the last several years. There were indications that this was the result of explicit efforts made by staff members.

The reading program. LAUSD Developmental Reading Program (DRP) materials (in both English and Spanish) and Harper Row basal series were basic in grades K through 6. The DRP skills continuum, with its accompanying texts and record-keeping cards, was used for reading instruction. (These were keyed to the District management system.) Supplementary reading materials - mostly in print, some audio-visual - and advice for classroom instructors were available in a "retrieval room" from the full-time reading resource teacher and her part-time aide. (Reduced funds had led to the end of a reading lab two years earlier.)

The Harper Row readers and workbooks had been in use for several years. The Developmental Reading Program came into use schoolwide four years ago although some teachers had employed DRP materials before that.

Reading instruction was "departmentalized" in grade 6: one teacher at that grade level taught reading to all sixth grade students. The leveling or teaming approach was used with grade 5. In recent years, reading in grades I through 4 had been handled by each teacher in his/her own classroom. But in 1980-81, these four grades went to a "leveling" approach: students were redistributed across first through fourth grade teachers so that one had children from several grades working at only two or three levels on the DRP continuum of reading skills. Both the reading resource teacher and the School Improvement coordinator taught one reading group daily to reduce the load on grade 1-4 teachers. And, under the tutelage of their regular classroom teachers, some kindergarteners had also begun reading.

42nd STREET PROFILE
1974 - 1980

Administrative
Area 4

YEAR	GRADE 6 READING NATIONAL PERCENTILE (CTBS)	TITLE I POVERTY RANK	DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ETHNICITY					% ENROLLMENT	% TRANSIENCY	% STABILITY
			Amer. Indian Alaskan Native	Black, Not Hispanic	Asian Pacific Islander	Hispanic	White, Not Hispanic			
1981-82		67								
1980-81		66								
1979-80	42	68	0.0	88.2	1.3	4.8	5.7	526	33.0	77.0
1978-79	42	118	0.0	91.3	1.7	1.5	5.6	486	33.4	77.0
1977-78	40	127	0.0	95.6	2.8	0.9	0.6	633	29.2	73.7
1976-77	36	122	0.1	94.9	3.1	1.7	0.3	713	26.3	77.8
1975-76	36	122	0.2	95.9	3.2	0.3	[illegible]	653	24.9	84.0
1974-75	19	131	0.1	93.8	4.3	1.0	0.7	695	23.0	78.0
1973-74	31	132	0.0	92.7	6.0	0.9	0.4	698	45.8	

General background. 42nd Street Elementary School is located a bit south of Santa Barbara Avenue between Arlington and Crenshaw. For two years (1978-80, 1979-80), the school's 100-plus sixth graders spend one semester at 42nd Street and the other at one of two schools in the San Fernando Valley. Participation in this desegregation arrangement ended thereafter. During the 1980-81 school year, 42nd Street was classified as a Racially Isolated Minority School (RIMS).

Two long-time staff members observed that the school served students from a wide variety of economic backgrounds. But as children from the attendance area's single-family homes had grown up and their parents had remained in the community, fewer of 42nd Street's children came from single-family residences and more came from the nearby apartments, where families were generally less well-to-do. With the onset of desegregation, they reported, some parents had elected to place their children in magnet schools or to take advantage of the Permits With Transportation (voluntary busing) Program. Others had chosen private schools. "So", one of the faculty members concluded, "we don't have as many academically strong students as we once had."

The principal, ending her third year at 42nd Street, had guided the school through two years of desegregation. She had tried to model a "humanistic, open approach to leadership," in part to encourage teachers to follow the same tactics with students. Raising student's self-image was one of her central goals, which she believed was especially critical now that 42nd Street had become a RIMS school. Awards for citzenship, sixth-grade "graduation" ceremonies, the school's drill team, and similar activities functioned, the principal explained, as a part of this efforts to raise children's self-esteem.

Staff members at 42nd Street were quick to point out that conditions observed during the research were not those that had existed when the school's sixth-grade median rose. Of the seven fifth/sixth-grade teachers in 1980-81, they noted, six had arrived at 42nd Street only in October. Furthermore, the organization of reading instruction had changed. While in the past a cooperative teaching approach had been followed (with teachers exchanging students so that they worked with groups at only two or three levels in the Ginn 720 series), this was no longer the case in 1980-81. During that year, at the principal's direction, the school had shifted to the self-contained classroom system: each teacher taught reading to the students assigned to his/her own classroom.

These changes in personnel, in the organization of instruction, and in the school's status in the Districtwide desegregation program - together with other alterations they seem to have stimulated - limited generalizations about the school that could be relevantly and validly made in this report. But, research at 42nd Street provided a great deal of evidence that was useful in the exploratory study

The reading program. Reading schoolwide was managed and taught using the Ginn 720 series. Its accompanying continuum had been matched to the LAUSD continuum of reading skills two years ago by the school's reading resource teacher.

The Ginn series was chosen "about four or five years ago" when, according to the resource teacher, "we looked at our scores and found our students did well on decoding but were lower on comprehension and on vocabulary skills." The Ginn materials, she recalled, were chosen for their strengths in these areas.

Supplemental reading instruction was afforded about 60 students daily, in groups of four to eight, in the Reading Lab. In addition, a reading specialist was available to assist with children two grade-levels or more below others in their classrooms. Working with a full-time aide, the specialist provided help for twenty such students a week, four or five each day. Students continued to receive the specialist's instruction, following an Individualized Educational Program, until they were able to work at the same level as their classmates.